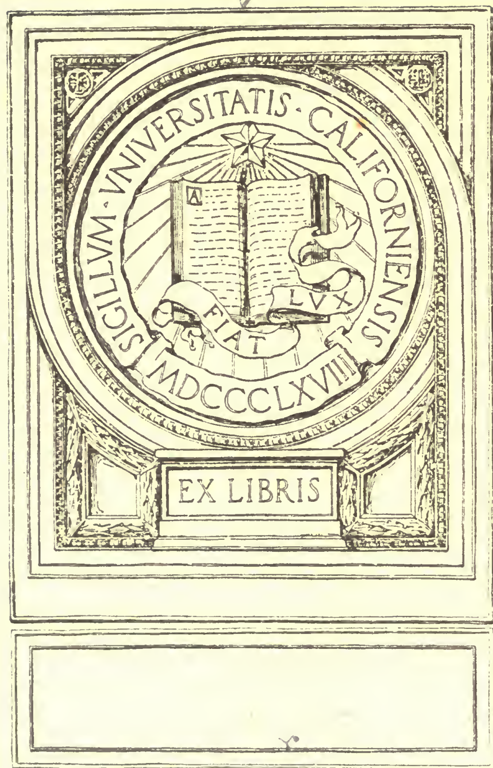
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REMINISCENCES

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BY

M. BETHAM-EDWARDS

AUTHOR OF
"THE WHITE HOUSE BY THE SEA," "DR JACOB," "KITTY"

LONDON
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1898

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REMINISCENCES OF
M. BETHAM-EDWARDS

CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD

A Baby Taking Notes—The Vanishing Pies—A Village Mystery—Eugene Sue—A Child Suicide

I suppose everyone has some recollection of first consciousness, some memory, more or less distinct, with which individuality and the recognition of it began. This experience in my own case is definite. Years have failed to obliterate the impression. A life-time of unceasing activity and of no little change has not dimmed the picture. Looking back across the bridge of years, I see to-day what I realised then. Were I transported to my childhood's home, I could put finger on the scene.

Nursemaids in former days were no less

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given to flirtation than at the present time. A red coat in a rustic village was ever as tinder to the spark. One sunshiny afternoon, some gallant soldier encountered or waylaid a young woman carrying a baby. The little girl in her nurse's arms was too young for tale-bearing, not too young, however, for observation. The scarlet coat so strikingly contrasted with blue sky and green hedges, the ingratiating smiles of the wearer, who, whilst making love to the maid, warily ministered to the good humour of her charge, the animation of the pair, all these things made up a clear, ineffaceable whole. From that incident memory begins.

The next landmark of childish life may also call up a smile. When about four years old I was sent with a sister to school. The arrangement was temporary; we were only exiled in view of an approaching event, but even under such circumstances our anxious mother did not forget her darlings. A hamper of home-made cakes and fruit pies was dispatched in order to console us. It occurred to the schoolmistress and her husband that

here was an admirable opening for economical hospitality. The little boarders were packed off to bed betimes, card tables were laid out, an occasional song or jig on the piano created pleasing diversion.

Now Mrs S——'s school occupied the rooms over her husband's shop, he was a chemist, and were all on the same floor; children are sure to remain wide awake when for some nefarious purpose their drowsiness is most desired. As we lay abed, the door of our room being ajar, with silent indignation we saw our cakes and currant pies carried into the dining-room opposite and deliberately placed on the table.

We had expected the hamper and recognised familiar dainties and dishes at a glance. Whether any unpleasantness arose out of the affair I cannot say. Years after I met the worthy couple, so in the main they were, and we chatted affably, my own mind being full of these misappropriated pies. I could not see that either husband or wife had outwardly changed in the least.

Every village has, I suppose, its mystery and

our own ought to have figured in a romance. Adjoining the fine old Elizabethan manor-house, which was my home, lay a small farmery with pleasant dwelling-house and garden. It was indeed adapted as a pleasure farm, the residence appearing out of all proportion with the quantity of land. Here, at the time I write of, lived in utter solitude a strange, as some thought a satanic, being. Whence he came, his family history, antecedents and profession were alike dark. After a fashion he now farmed, keeping his fifty and odd acres in some sort of cultivation by a labourer or two. During the daytime he was rarely to be seen; towards dusk, all the year round, the awful figure, wrapt in a long black cloak, would stalk to and fro, frightening passers-by, never losing eeriness in the eyes of near neighbours.

"Master," one evening said a village wag, emboldened by potations, "you remind me of the old one."

"You will find the difference if you ever get to a certain place," was the slowly enunciated reply. "You are on the right road for it, too."

The spokesman of the gaping, tittering hobble-dehoys was no very reputable character, but it required some boldness to accost the doctor, Dr Owen he called himself. One loafer would egg on another, less for the love of sport than of oracular response. How different these utterances to the tongue of every day!

Suffolk speech is a drawl, sentence after sentence forming a gamut, each ending on the upper note. The doctor's matter was as striking as his manner.

"Master," upon another occasion cried a looker-on, "your cloak wants mending!"

"It does not want mending so much as your manners do," was the reply, the speaker statelily continuing his twilight stroll. Up and down, backwards and forwards would stalk the tall, attenuated figure, enveloped from head to foot in a black cloak, the little girls of his next door neighbour scuttling away at the apparition.

What intercourse this strange man held with his fellow farmers was characterised by grim humour. Everyone had his nickname

or diminutive. Thus my father, whose baptismal name and patronymic were one, was always "Neddy." One day our young heifers, in local phraseology styled "buds," got into the doctor's premises and committed all sorts of depredations.

"Tell Neddy to drive his buds back," was the doctor's sole remonstrance, the messenger, of course, as best he could, imitating the sonorous voice and unaccustomed elocution.

No woman ever crossed his threshold, and on his departure, the keeping-room or parlour fireplace was found piled up with egg-shells and other rubbish. He had evidently lived after anchorite fashion, paying no heed to order or hygiene. It speaks well for the harmless unsuspecting nature of those Suffolk villagers that such a character should remain unvictimised by horse-play or brutal jokes. As will be seen further on, intolerance reigned elsewhere. We must go to the rectory, the pulpit, for anathemas and display of bitter anti-Christian spirit.

There is little doubt that the solitary thus

puzzling his neighbours was a foreigner, perhaps some Polish refugee finding harbourage on our shores. The misfortune was that his sojourn did not occur ten years later. What a study would he have afforded a young novelist! The reminiscences here for the first time put upon paper are of early childhood, of years spent in the nursery, not the schoolroom.

The dawn of literature as a force upon any active intelligence is ever of psychological interest. Some of us are awakened to the consciousness one way, some another. Oddly enough, a novelist who has sedulously avoided sensation, who in maturer years has but moderately relished this element in fiction, should have surrendered to the wand of Eugene Sue! The masterpiece of this writer, perhaps the masterpiece of all sensational literature, was now making a noise from one end of Europe to the other. A translation fell into the hands of our governess, who read it aloud after tea and lessons, her older pupils plying the needle, the little ones, myself among the number, busy with their dolls in a corner.

To one of these, a child of six or seven, doll-dressing now proved quite unattractive. Not venturing to betray my interest, I listened breathlessly, every page heightening feverish excitement. Bedtime came as a cruel sentence; to demur would of course have been fatal, a brusque end of enchantment. So the gaps were filled by aid of imagination, enough being heard to glow over in secret, to remember ever after.

That marvellous story has never since come in my way, the gaps remain, yet vivid as when heard are the scenes taken in so breathlessly—Adrienne's escape from the convent—Rodin and the old woman in the church—Prince Djalma and the poisoned dagger—Rose and Blanche separating as they entered a cholera ward in search of their father, at the other end falling into each other's arms fatally stricken with the pestilence. Why seek disenchantment by reading the story right through to-day? Spell-bound I could hardly be as in that Suffolk schoolroom years ago. The effect of those dramatic episodes was, I may add,

purely literary. They no more terrified than the witch scene in *Macbeth* or the ghost scene in *Hamlet*, both of which very soon afterwards became also familiar to me. Creative art, whether poetic or plastic, is or ought to be, illusion. Yield to the illusion and the artist receives final verdict. Here was no question of the reader's personality of daily surroundings. A police report, the description of a cholera ward in newspapers, demoralise, disturb young readers, and why? Because they are living truths, not imaginative pictures.

The divine law of retribution, the stupendous problems of good and evil, of mutability and death, were not slow to present themselves to my mind.

The only play-fellow of these three little girls, the younger children of a numerous family, was a little boy named Arthur W——, and that most terrible phenomenon, a youthful prodigy. Born of elderly parents, the hope of a scientific but whimsical father, the fetish of a handsome, winning, but most fond and foolish mother, he had obtained this reputation from sheer

presumptuousness and a total disregard of accepted canons. The right and the wrong of any matter in his eyes and his mother's was his own inclination. Extraordinarily beautiful, the bloom of that cherubic face, the transparency of those blue eyes are before me as I write, he knew how to trade upon such personal advantages and human weakness. Whenever the terrible boy spent a day with us, it was a case of topsy-turveydom, of general racket, discomfort, and disorder that only several days' brooming and brushing set right.

His favourite diversion was what he called preaching the Gospel. In order that this could be done with due ministration to his vanity, a little surplice had been made for him, having stole and bands of orthodox pattern. In this guise he would harangue the household, a large landing-place being fitted up as a church, mattresses placed for seats, young and old, farm lads and dairymaids, called from their occupations to listen. The spectacle never seemed to strike anyone as irreverent, yet my mother was a deeply re-

ligious woman, and family church-going at that time was the order of the day.

Another of Master Arthur's favourite pastimes was custard-making, so-called, for the hens. He would look up eggs, then carry them to a favourite resort of our feathered kind, a raised sandy spot of the orchard in which they could burrow and take their dust baths. Smashing half a dozen eggs into one of the holes here abounding, and stirring the whole with a stick, he would complacently proceed to the next, wasting a shillings' worth of farm produce, but as he said, "leaving all the hens a nice custard."

This fooling came to untimely and most tragic end. Arthur's father, a retired ship's surgeon, combined the two professions of surgeon and apothecary, coloured globes as in chemists' shops to-day announcing the fact. Mr W—— was a man of considerable scientific attainments and given to experimentation. It was quite natural that an active-minded child should interest himself in his father's pursuits and pick up many facts relating to drugs and their effects.

Natural it was also that school seemed anything but attractive in his eyes. There at least the will of Arthur W—— did not reign supreme. There he could neither preach the Gospel in stole and surplice nor make custards of eggs and dust for the hens. On the matter of attendance papa ever remained inexorable, or ever tried to remain inexorable, whilst mamma exhausted her ingenuity in finding pleas for default. It dawned upon the boy's mind that as he always stayed at home when physicked by paternal hands, he might just as well physic himself in order to play the truant. An occasional dose of mild purgative answered very well. Something had given him the colic, said his mother. Stay at home for once he must.

There came at last temptation of desperate kind. One day he returned from school determined not to go on the morrow, or to have done with it for once and for all? Dread of punishment or disgrace, perhaps sheer perversity, actuated the deed. Surreptitiously stealing into the surgery, possessing himself of a deadly

drug, he swallowed the dose, and one summer morning news came that he was dead! To his little play-fellows the shock was great. Who could entirely love a being so self-centered, so perverse? But he seemed part of our own lives, his very vagaries made the loss more sensible. When the funeral procession stopped for some minutes at our garden gate, the gate he had ofttimes swung wide with such joyful shout, there was a general wail through nursery and schoolroom. Death had become a reality to the youngest!

CHAPTER II

OUR RECTOR

PULPIT AMENITIES—WHAT'S IN A NAME?—"ONLY ONE D——D DROP!"—BURIAL FEES—PLAINTS OF A POOR RECTOR'S WIFE—GIRLS OF THE PERIOD—"WHO HAD THE PARSON'S WINE?"

BEFORE the reasoning faculty is awakened, children appraise things not as they are, but as they seem to be. Their unformed minds cannot strip off excrescences, take account of what Spinoza calls limitations, divine the kernel hidden in unsightly shell. Thus it comes about that institutions and embodiments, noble as ideals, elevating in their essential character, are wholly misjudged by youthful thinkers. We blame and criticise what is really a decadence or maybe a parody, no reflex of lofty original.

And nothing is more difficult to get rid of than prejudices, rather notions, formed in early life. The following pages will illustrate these

remarks. Again and again have I been blamed for severity when writing of the Church of England and its clergy. Strange indeed were it otherwise!

Our village numbered three hundred and odd souls and well bore out Voltaire's famous dictum as to the disproportion of English sauces and sects. Two of the former were certainly known—celery-sauce eaten with roast pork and apple-sauce served with the Michaelmas goose. Sects were almost as diverse as surnames. One farmer was a Quaker, another a Swedenborgian, a third a Dissenter, of what precise denomination I do not recollect, our toll-gate keeper was a Roman Catholic, our cobbler a free-thinker, our labouring folk, except during a few weeks in the year, Nonconformists of various denominations.

The infinitesimal minority attended church. I should say that the general attitude in theological matters was one of scepticism or profound indifference.

My penultimate remark demands explanation. Noncomformity was of course the one unpar-

donable sin in clerical eyes. On my childish ears from a neighbouring pulpit once fell *inter alia* this horrible sentence:—"The doors of a Dissenting chapel are the gates of hell." It may readily be imagined that when Christmas came round and the parochial charities were to be distributed, poor families eking out existence on eight or nine shillings a week thought of their beef and coals. Some pious person hundreds of years before had bequeathed a certain sum to be thus expended by parson and church-wardens. The latter did their best to secure an equitable apportioning, but no chapel-goer could feel sure of his dole. Laughable, yet pathetic, it was to see how the church gradually filled as Christmas drew near. By the third week in December hardly a seat remained vacant. And of course the rector always hoped against hope that some who came for beef and coals might stay for their souls' sake.

This worthy man emptied his church and drove his congregation wholesale into the arms of dissent by sheer want of tact and self-control. He was not without kindly impulses; he paid his

way and lived uprightly. But an enormous family taxed alike his resources and his naturally bearish and ungovernable temper. He was no more fitted to be a clergyman than to be dancing-master to the Royal family.

Of his numerous children one boy was particularly obstreperous at church. He would put his mother's bonnet strings into her mouth when the poor woman drowsed during the long marital sermon, make wry faces at his brothers and sisters, and otherwise set them a'titter. The family pew lay immediately under the pulpit, but at last, the contagion of mischief proving irresistible, the incorrigible youngster was imprisoned on the steps behind his father.

On a summer afternoon hardly had the final benediction escaped the preacher's lips when a tremendous blow resounded through the church. Everyone stared aghast. With a backhanded cuff that might almost have felled an ox our rector had sent the unfortunate boy backwards shouting for all to hear,

"How dare you, sir, thus misbehave yourself when I am preaching God's word in the pulpit?"

Doubtless a highly effective moral lesson was intended. The result was that many church people betook themselves to chapel ever after.

Upon another occasion as he entered the aisle and was proceeding toward the reading desk he perceived the village clerk whispering to a neighbour. It was the fashion in those days, for aught I know may be so still, for this functionary to sit close to the officiating clergyman and read responses and alternate verse of the day's Psalms.

"You, parish Clerk," shouted the rector, "how dare you carry on conversation when your minister has entered the church?"

The clerk explained that he was only asking after a neighbour's health, but the altercation, for so it was, caused several people to quit the sacred building and created no little excitement.

Here is another souvenir. A young married couple had determined, for some reason or other, to have their first born christened simply "Fred." The fancy was perhaps foolish, but the child's name certainly concerned its parents only. They would have nothing

to do with Frederick, but only the monosyllabic pet name.

This is the scene I witnessed as a child. We were especially interested in little Fred, and had sent him his christening frock.

Clergyman—" Name this child ! "

Mother, shyly—" Fred, sir."

Clergyman, roughly—" Frederick, you mean ?"

Mother, growing nervous, feeling that all eyes are upon her—" No, sir, Fred, if you please, sir."

Clergyman, with an impatient murmur and vicious splash of holy water—" Frederick, I baptise thee in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen."

As a matter of course, Fred's parents afterwards patronised the meeting-house. All kinds of queer names had been accorded in orthodox fashion ; one neighbour's boy was called Julius Cæsar, another child Rosabella, why not Fred ?

These scandals should have been stopped by appeal to ecclesiastical courts, public protest, wide publicity, but the Suffolk temperament is somewhat lethargic, people are slow to move, unwilling to encounter litigation. Whilst the

weather remained fine they went farther afield, attending church or chapel elsewhere. On the return of winter, snow and slush kept them nearer home. The parish church became a *pis aller*.

As I have before said under the rector's rough, even bearish exterior, beat a kindly heart. He would laughingly recount how a poor parishioner once begged the loan of his black trousers in order to attend his father's funeral. The request was granted. Another form of kindliness became liable to abuse.

I do not know how it may be in most country places, but in our village a curious custom prevailed. The wine used for communion service was luscious Tent or Malaga, and what remained in the chalice was given to the aged poor who were present. The ceremonial had a peculiarly aristocratic character little according with the doctrine of Christian humility. No chamberlain more exactly assigned the rank of court visitors. First knelt the rector's wife and daughters and squire's family, next in order came the larger or so-called gentlemen farmers and their womankind, following these

the village shopkeeper and small tradesman and tradeswomen; lastly, the labouring folk, generally a pitiable group, consisting of decrepid grandsires and crones just able to hobble.

No sooner had the solemn rite been administered than a sonorous deep drawn quaffing was heard from the lower end of the rails, the poor old men and women gratefully swallowing the remains of the wine. It might have been better to go through this little performance in the vestry. Anyhow, who can doubt that such a custom proved a snare? My nurse (the good woman lives and corresponds with me still) was returning from her own church one Sunday morning when she encountered a neighbour coming from his; it was Sacrament Sunday.

"So, Master (labourers were called Master never Mister) Smith, like me, I s'pose, you have been to the table."

"Yes," was the ruffled reply, "and I might as well have staid at home. I only got one d——d drop"!

These honest souls believed in church and

chapel up to a certain point, but had very little reverence about them. Quiet humour, a rationalist frame of mind, are Suffolk characteristics. The spiritual aspect of religion and of religious observance, if it came at all, did not come from without. In the matter of Biblical criticism, they were often far ahead of their teachers, at any rate of their teachers' avowed belief. Formalism, incompetence and scandals in the church, exaggeration and grotesqueness in the meeting-house, had brought about a dead level of indifference. In the defence of material interests there was much more alertness. Clerical kindnesses were shown towards both rich and poor during sickness. But when a well-to-do parishioner died there was sure to be a squabble about burial fees for "cutting the ground," "bricking the grave," etc. The family losses which saddened my childhood, the sickness and death of mother and sisters, are subjects of no general interest, and too sacred, too near—so they seem, although divided from the present by a long life-time—to be more than just hinted

at here. But there are circumstances attending these sorrows which seem almost matters of history, at any rate they contribute to an understanding of the times. I well remember unseemly bickerings as to a certain bricked grave, one of the many I stood by in these early days. So outrageous were the charges for burial ground and attendant privileges that my father demurred. The only answer to his protest was a little volume of printed tariffs, from which it appeared that a churchyard was an incumbent's property, and that he might charge just what he chose for the permission to lie there. In one corner was a congeries of tiny mounds, graves of unbaptised babyhood.

A country parson although having a good house, garden and glebe, and three hundred a year, was not rich at the time I write of, when twelve boys and girls had to be fed, clothed and educated.

"My dear Mrs G——" said his wife to a neighbour in my hearing, "I assure you, it is as much as we can do to cover our children's nakedness."

That she certainly contrived to do, poor woman, but the fare was ofttimes Spartan, while education was regarded as strictly a unisexual affair, no more a girl's prerogative than breeches or tobacco. These sisters in more senses than one had to pick up the crumbs that fell from their brothers' table.

"I love being ill," was the confidence of one little girl to a playfellow, "because then I have a little lump of butter and piece of bread and spread for myself."

Many undesirable lessons these poor girls acquired; of education, in the accepted sense of the word, they got no inkling, but one thing they did learn thoroughly, namely, the doctrine of self-abnegation. Whilst the sons obtained scholarships and nominations, by hook or by crook wriggled their way into something that could euphemistically be termed a profession, the daughters mended stockings, nursed the little ones, toiled from morning to night in keeping up appearances. I well remember one instance of sisterly devotion. A young brother was obliged to keep a prostrate

condition for many weeks in consequence of an accident. Day after day, hour after hour, he would amuse himself by shooting peas from a popgun, his eldest sister, a tall growing girl, stooping to pick them up. The perpetual bending to the ground must have been very trying; not so much as a playful remonstrance passed her lips. Young women of the present day, Girton and Newnham students who "go up" or "come down" with their brothers and comrades of the other sex, little dream what girl-life was like in former days. Whether higher education of women so-called has in equal degree developed this quality of self-abnegation is another matter. For my part I have my doubts, and was ever of opinion that unselfishness is pre-eminently a masculine virtue. We must, however, know where to look for it. Despite the difficulty of clothing juvenile nakedness and the thread-bare gentility of a poor parsonage, it enjoyed numberless privileges. Amongst others was that of a well-filled wine-cellar, gift or legacy of rich patron

"The parson's wine and who had it," now matter of local tradition, is too good a story to omit here. Every village has its wit, and rustic wit is no respecter of persons. When the great robbery occurred, when the parsonage was burglariously assailed and its stores of port and sherry ransacked, public excitement knew no bounds. The wine-cellar abutted on the dwelling-house and before effecting their purpose the thieves were obliged to reckon with a fierce dog chained up close by. Every circumstance pointed to intimate acquaintance with premises and surroundings, but police and detectives could obtain no clue.

One day rumours got about that our wit and oracle, a tall, lean bricklayer, had dropped significant hints and inuendoes as to the theft. He was even heard to say that he knew well enough who had the parson's wine.

Without losing a minute the rector hurried off, at once announcing his errand.

"I understand, Kersey," he said, "that you should say you know who had my wine?"

"Well, sir," was the answer with a mis-

chievous twinkle of the eye, "and so I do. You had it once, but could not keep it!"

The poor rector went home slightly crest-fallen, but he was too much of a humourist himself not to relish the joke.

That mystery remains unsolved to this day. General suspicion lighted upon an old and much trusted dependant of the rectory, groom, gard-ener and boots, who had grown grey in clerical service and looked like an out-of-elbow parson himself.

As I have before mentioned narrow means did not stand in the way of routine benevolences. When labourer's wives lay in, gifts of broth and arrowroot accompanied the parish bag, and even infectious diseases failed to deter visits of condolence or charity. But there existed no real liking or sympathy between class and class, no tie binding rectory and cottage. This is the parody I heard in our clergy-man's nursery :—

> "Whene'er I take my walks abroad,
> How many poor I see
> Eating pork without a fork,
> Oh, Lord, what beasts they be!"

Petty slights, little acts of tyranny, made folks forgetful of broth and arrowroot. They did not relish their front doors being pushed open without preliminary knock, nor the clipping of their children's curls at school. As to dissenters these remained under perpetual ban. Were not the doors of a meeting-house the gates of hell?

CHAPTER III

OUR VILLAGE

Types and Feats—A Vestal Virgin—Manetta and the Ghost—Our Sappho

Our village, and I presume every other, could furnish almost as many types as Homer's Iliad. We had our Hector, our Calchas, our Odysseus, the strong man, the seer, the man of wile. We had also a Sappho, and to come to modern parallels a longer catalogue. These exceptional men and women have earned no immortality. Their reptutation died with them, but whilst it lasted was widespread and tremendous. An awful halo surrounded their brows ; one and all enjoyed a certain kind of solitude, the solitude that waits on inborn, unchallengeable superiority. None wore his heart upon his sleeve for daws to peck at.

Our strong man was the miller, and emblematically his wind-mill occupied the highest

point of the village. The sails as they deliberately rose and fell seemed to say—touch me who dare—to symbolise the strongest arms to be found for miles around. In local speech you could ride a white mare black before you would find a match for miller T——'s thews and sinews. What feats of bodily prowess he had displayed I never learned; that they must have been superlative high renown testified. Did a half-drunken encounter take place at the Swan; did bullies and braggadocios threaten the public peace, the words—"Send for the miller," sufficed. A regiment of dragoons could not have more promptly and effectually restored order. Had he lived in the early part of the century he would most certainly have been despatched to Folkestone or Dover, regarded as more than enough to conquer Buonaparte himself.

He was no giant, on the contrary, under rather than over medium stature. But you had only to look at him to endorse popular opinion.

Nature had made him up not of bone and muscle, but of steel and iron. He would have

crushed an ordinary athlete as easily as a lion makes mincemeat of a lamb. Personal courage is fortunately not dependent upon physical supereminence, and our bold man, whom I will next describe, was a weakling. Long his "deed of high renown," one of many, lived in local annals.

It was a bitter winter night when neighbour S——, a small farmer, heard suspicious noises on his premises, stealthy movements of marauder or house breaker.

Springing from his bed, without stopping to put on shoe or stocking, coat or breeches, he felt his way downstairs and out of doors. At the sound of his approach the thief took to his heels, Farmer S—— giving chase.

Across farmyard and orchard, past pightle * and field, over stile and five-barred gate skurried the pair, pursuer barefoot and in his shirt—an ordinary cotton shirt, so folks said—pursued having the advantage or perhaps disadvantage of full equipment. But the farmer, a thin,

* Pightle, a little enclosure. Prov. Eng., Webster. This word is in common use in Suffolk.

ailsome, slip of a man had made up his mind. The hen-stealer, horse-stealer or burglar should be lodged in Ipswich jail if his name was John S——.

Caught the runaway was, and I never heard that his captor was worse for his wintry chase. The adventure became famous, a favourite story in alehouse and chimney corner; alas, no one ever put it into rhyme! John Gilpin's ride in itself was not more suggestive than Farmer S——'s run. No one ever saw him afterwards without conjuring up the scene, his thin legs bare to the knee, his white cotton shirt fluttering ghost-like in the wintry starlight, his frantic leaps over hedge and ditch, his tumbles and lightning-like recuperations.

Our wit has been already mentioned, we had also a master of drollery, considered as a fine art, from whose lips never under any circumstance dropped what he considered to be a truism or common place.

A sheep-shearer by trade he travelled the country far and wide, supplying every farm with comicalities till next season.

His person evoked a smile. Preposterously tall and preposterously lean he stalked about with an expression of face impossible to describe. His features were so composed as to be in themselves the best possible jest; folks laughed when he opened his lips and giggled expectantly when he remained silent. Sheep-shearing, presided over by old Tim, did duty for the year's comic annual. His grandiloquence never for a moment quitted him. Thus instead of saying "Bring me the small sheep as your master bids," he would say, "Now for yonder hanimal that Mr Edwards tarm (terms) a littl'un." I have seen my father laugh at sheep-shearing time till the tears ran down, but most likely old Tim's jokes were not all suited to the family circle. Anyhow his reputation must here be taken upon trust.

The women of our village offered infinite diversity of type.

First and foremost I must place our only old maid, named Sarah M——. In this little Paradise there was a lover and more to spare for every lass. The disastrous migration to

towns of a later generation had not as yet begun. Partly from this reason, and partly, I presume, from the fact that spinsterhood and an unassailable reputation were not common in rural districts, Sarah M—— enjoyed a respect bordering upon veneration. No vestal virgin of Rome in its austerer days was hedged about with more sanctity. Middle-aged widowers and bachelors sighed as they watched the trim, spick and span figure, well assured that it would never dignify their fireside. Gay Lotharios, Don Juans of the plough, wondered what a woman could be made of to resist every advance, humdrum or otherwise. No tragic story of lost or faithless love had hardened Sarah's heart. She preferred spinsterhood, that was all, the bare, cruel perplexing truth. Many and many a time have I seen her on the way to church, prayer-book and spotless pocket-handkerchief in her neatly gloved palm, little shawl nicely adjusted, the composed, slightly severe features and direct glance seeming to challenge criticism. She ever consorted with matrons and elderly folks, never with

youths and maidens, although at this time she could not have been much over thirty.

A washerwoman by trade, she used to take laundry-work from the town, herself wheeling it in a barrow to and fro. Her cottage and garden were ever models of neatness. Well I remember the borders of Sweet William, Jack behind the Garden Gate, and Welcome home Husband, how-ever-so-drunk; the second flower here named is the Polyanthus, the third, the common yellow Sedum. Cottage folks never knew this last mentioned plant by any other name, inappropriate enough in Sarah's virginal domain.

Manetta P——, known in local parlance as the terrifier, was the direct opposite of her demure neighbour. Well indeed did Miss Manetta deserve her nickname, for she had done her best to drive folks stark staring mad. A girl's life in those days was passing dull. Here marriage came in the way of all, but if anything, it was duller than maidenhood. And although Manetta was unbeautiful, not at all of the taking sort, she would be wooed and won

after most prosaic fashion. These drawbacks made the poor thing bitter and mischievous, ready for little malicious turns or for anything in the way of sensation. To use a favourite French expression, *elle cherchait des émotions*, she sought after emotions, good, bad or indifferent, change she must have at any price. Thought-reading, theosophy, psychical research, had not as yet disturbed weak brains, table-turning had not emerged from the Limbo to which it has since been consigned. But what village ever wanted its ghost story, and many a blood-curdling, hair-bristling one had our own. On a certain wintry twilight, a carter—I knew him well — was returning from Ipswich when a woman with eyes gleaming like red hot coals and black hair streaming upon milk-white raiment, seized his horse's head and forbade advance. He dropped on his knees, mumbled some words out of Scripture, and lo! when he looked up, the wraith was gone. Countless stories of the kind passed muster. Signs and wonders were religiously believed in. Fortune-tellers did a brisk trade. Even the

"wise man" was hardly a survival, I mean to that useful individual who could elucidate every mystification, interpret dreams, discover lost property, throw light upon coming battle, murder and sudden death. It entered Manetta's head one day that life would become much more diverting and the object of her destiny be immensely furthered, if she could succeed in scaring her neighbours out of their wits. So, without taking counsel of anyone but her own foolish self, she put on a sheet, floured her face, let down her hair, and noiselessly stole from a back window. Circumstances at first favoured this bold undertaking. Hiding her disguises under her mother's dark market cloak, she could get unperceived to high ground overlooking the village street, there unrobe and flit hither and thither. In summer time, folks did not all go to bed with their hens. There would, anyhow, be stragglers from the Swan, belated stockmen or a gossip or two abroad. To Manetta's intense gratification she was observed, fled from, evidently believed in, as the saying goes, swallowed whole. Radiantly

she flitted behind a bush, popped on her market cloak and almost creeping on all fours, made the best of her way home.

Next day and the next, this terrible apparition appeared, but it was not till several had elapsed that anyone opened his lips on the subject. All were afraid to begin, to become the general laughing stock. When once the matter was broached, excitement became general, and the more people discussed their ghost the readier were they to believe and to caress their belief. In itself the thing was portentous, of a piece with judgments and visitations, Sodom and Gomorrha, but, considered from a local and individual point of view, inviting and desirable. A ghost conferred so much distinction, created such widespread curiosity! The notabilities of the county—who could say?—of the kingdom, would be magnetised to our village. Its fortune was surely made as that of Shottisham * by its fasting girl.

There is ever one rationalist to a host of the credulous. When several children had been nearly frightened into fits and only the

* A well-known local incident.

more valiant of their elders dared stir abroad at dusk, matters were brought to a climax. Egged on by some bold spirit a band of youths set upon the hapless Manetta, her ghost-hood was ignominiously unveiled, and with rough horseplay the sorry farce was brought to an end.

Manetta had succeeded in obtaining notoriety, but of no enviable kind. For months existence became unbearable. But years wore on; she found a husband with the rest; very likely a time came when she gloried in the frolic of her youth. Of a very different type was Betty H——, our village Sappho, rather should I say our feminine Heber, her gentle muse dealing not with lovers' ecstacy or frenzied desire, but pious themes and religious consolation.

Betty H—— to this hour, for she lives still, cannot write her own name. In early days, however, she taught herself to read, and in early days she composed verse. Needless to say that her literature consisted of the Bible, Sunday hymnals, and a few old-fashioned stories, such as "The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain," "The Dairyman's Daughter," "The Cottagers of Glen-

burnie," "Coelebs in search of a wife." But a ploughman's wife has little time for reading and native faculty requires no spur. Over her household work, her baking, brewing, and mending, Betty would put rhyme to rhyme, verse to verse, thus beautifying homely toil. If ever existence needed the embellishment of poetry it was her own. Two dire problems must be resolved somehow, namely, the feeding of six mouths, in village phrase, the filling of six bellies, and next in importance, the covering of so many nakednesses upon perhaps ten shillings a week. Betty's culinary inventions were many and ingenious. It is wonderful how she contrived that filling of bellies. In harvest time, her board was more generously spread. Plum-puddings then attracted the wasps in every cottage, harvest cakes were eaten at bever,* as the afternoon collation was called, a taste of beef was added to the daily pork. Then in times of child-birth and sickness how terrible were her deprivations! I have no hesitation in

* Bever, old French bevre, Lat. bibere. "Without any prejudice to their bevers."—Beaumont and Fletcher.

affirming that the lot of an average workman's family nowadays is positively luxurious, Sybaritism itself, compared to the Spartan *régime* of former times. The little folks who flock to the board schools, alike in town or country, have no idea how their grandparents lived. Betty's experiences, written by herself, might cure many a malcontent.

Many years ago her little pieces were published under the title of "Verses by the Wife of a Suffolk Ploughman," the authoress, I rejoice to say, profiting by the sale. But Fame, that last infirmity of noble minds, offered guerdon sweeter still. Betty enjoys a renown undiminished by time or change.

CHAPTER IV

THE SONS OF THE SOIL

Notions Geographical and Asmographical — Moral Standards—Chivalrous Feeling—A Ploughman's Career—One-Eyed Dick—Pharisees in the Pulpit—Photography—Turtle and His Gang—Schools—Stewed Prunes—Prison Fare—The "House"

Hardly is there greater divergence between metropolitan bustle and some Cranford of to-day, than between our village at the present time and its former self. Public life, intercourse with the outer world, cosmopolitan sympathies, were non-existent. Perhaps a London daily might reach Hall or Rectory. One or two local weeklies did duty in farm-house, mill, general shop and smithy. Here the newsvendor's business began and ended. Farmers for the most part remained illiterate to a degree which now appears incredible. In the matter of politics, farm-labourers were as ignorant as French peasants before the

Revolution. Jacques Bonhomme, indeed, even under Louis XIV., the greatest and worst despot who ever lived, enjoyed certain municipal privileges, took part in what was a partially developed Parish Council. Hodge, throughout the greater portion of the Victorian era, no more shared political or civic existence than the black population of Virginia before the war of Secession. To him an election meant only so much boozing in an ale-house, so much throwing of rotten eggs and dead kittens at the hustings, so much hip, hip, hooraying at the bidding of his employer.

As to parochial business, the mere suggestion of voting on rural affairs in company of parson and squire, would have shocked his moral sense, savoured of sacrilegiousness, of sin against the Holy Ghost itself. Farmers could of course read, write and keep simple accounts; their labourers, as a rule, could do none of these things. Otherwise the mental horizon of the two classes differed surprisingly little.

At some distance from our village lay a hill, or what by euphemism was so called,

Suffolk being as flat as a barn-floor. This almost imperceptible slope was known as "America Hill," why, I cannot say. The village folks, alike wise and simple, firmly believed that if you climbed "America Hill" and walked on and on and on, you would wake up in Columbus' Continent.

Here is a well-to-do farmer's notion of cosmography, heard by myself at home. After those wonderful farm-house teas, to be described later on, host and guest would smoke a pipe over what our French neighbours call "un grog." And conversation would occasionally diverge from fat stock and corn prices to topics more remote and elevating.

"There is one thing I should much like to know," said a visitor, "if, as wise folks say, the world is round as an apple dumpling, how on earth is the water kept in its place?"

"Why," was the prompt reply, "it must, of course, be boarded up."

The listeners made no observation. Poor as the solution seemed it was evidently thought better than none at all.

Whether morals and manners were better or worse for such artlessness, who shall decide? Certainly folks neither spoke, acted, nor thought as they do now. Standards of conduct differed from those now in general acceptance. For instance, walking one day to Ipswich, we met a labourer's wife and her two daughters, girls of twelve and fourteen.

"So, Mrs P——," said my eldest sister, "you have been shopping?"

"No, Miss," replied the good woman with an unmistakable air of self approval, "but I am anxious to do my girls all the good I can, so I have just taken them to see a man hanged."

I was about twelve years old when I heard this and another little dialogue one summer twilight in the village lane; the meaning of the latter did not dawn upon my mind till many years after.

"Come, Ann," cried a village swain to a tall, red-haired girl standing on the doorstep, "are you ready for a walk?"

"Oh! no, Tat," rejoined the maiden with-

out the slightest hesitation. "It is not dark enough yet."

Moral standards were certainly not high, nevertheless these uncouth ploughmen often testified a chivalrous sentiment, perhaps less common in other ranks. More frequently than otherwise, the girl who had been betrayed was "made an honest woman of," that is to say, taken to church by her lover. One benevolent clergyman of the neighbourhood did his best to stop irregularities by marrying his parishioners for nothing; many unions were thus legalised.

Those poor faithful lovers of the plough! Where did they learn chivalrous sentiment? How indeed could a spark of romance take fire in such breasts, a single ray of joyousness warm such hearts? Alike mentally, morally, spiritually, each son of the soil could say with Topsy, "I growed." Set to rook-scaring and stone-picking at an age when children of a better class are coddled in the nursery, breeched without the civilising influences of ABC, Jack the Bean Stalk and Cock Robin;

as a hobbledehoy boarded and lodged by some farmer, his daily routine hardly above the level of creatures more long suffering still, of

> "sheep and goats,
> That nourish a blind life within the brain,"

as a man, his loftiest ambition soaring no higher than the prize of a tin kettle at a ploughing match — who but feels a tinge of shame as he contemplates the picture?

In Mr Stead's amusing account of his imprisonment he tells us how strongly he felt tempted to throw his prayer book at the chaplain's head, the cause of provocation I forget. I well remember feeling temptation of the kind stronger still some years ago. The occasion was the march of a Labourer's Union to church in Sussex. Some fifty or more ploughmen had tramped thither from the neighbouring parishes and it seemed natural to expect an appropiate allusion in the sermon, some word of sympathy and encouragement, at least a friendly God-speed. The preacher was no poverty-stricken parson, whose wife found it

difficult to cover her children's nakedness; he was rich, kept plenty of servants, had doubtless risen from a roast beef lunch and would go home to an orthodox dinner of soup, fish, and joint, with port at dessert. This is what he said after a long rigmarole setting forth the claims of his brethren to gratitude.

"Do not be misled by flatterers and false teachers who would raise your expectations to equality and an equal share of earthly blessings. Remember what the Scripture says: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit for their's is the kingdom of Heaven.' If your portion is hard here below, comfort yourselves with the thought that in your Father's House are many mansions."—&c. &c.

With what relish could I have hurled, not a prayer book, but a text at that man's head!—"Thou hypocrite," but I leave the rest to the reader's memory or imagination. Disappointedly the delegates went home to their tea and bread and butter, whilst with unctuous self-complacence the rector without doubt carved his fat capon and sipped his old port, caress-

ing himself with the conviction that for a time at least he had stemmed unlawful ambitions and curbed unholy aspirations.*

It is my misfortune not my fault if early experiences of what the late Lord Houghton wittily described as "that branch of the Civil Service usually called the Church of England," have been deplorable. But even twenty years ago a farm labourer's life differed immensely from that I am describing. In our village there was neither reading-room, cricket club, annual flower-show, brass band, nor any other organisation, social, literary or political. There were neither pictures on the cottage wall nor books on the cottage table. And here I would note the incalculable, the beneficent influence of photography. Only those familiar with rural life of an ante-photographic period can measure the revolution here affected. Schopenhauer truly remarks that prolonged separation must in time render friends visionary to each other.

The cheap photograph has done more than

* This happened somewhere about 1873-4, years and years after I had taken leave of Suffolk.

brighten the life and strengthen family ties of the poor, it has served to awaken an artistic feeling, a craving for house decoration, beauty, or at least adornment, in the home.

"Ah, miss," said our old charwoman to an artistic young lady trying her hand at portraits, "if only you could draw my Carrie! What a comfort for me to behold her features long after she is dead and gone!"

It apparently never occurred to Mrs W—— that in all probability she would be dead and gone before her Carrie, but my Suffolk friends had an odd way of expressing themselves.

We hear a good deal of Darkest England, periodic distress, agricultural depression, and so on. There is no doubt that a cheap tripper at Hastings, whether artizan or rustic, spends more on a single day's outing in 1897 than his forerunner, maybe his forerunner's family, of fifty years ago, on recreation from the cradle to the grave; equally certain it is that cottage boards of the present time are regally furnished forth by comparison with those spread when Queen Victoria was a bride.

Two stories will illustrate the latter assertion.

"Don't I like passing Mr G——'s (Mr G—— was a farmer) on Christmas Day," said a lad to his mother, "such a smell of roast beef! you can smell it ever so far." Roast beef in these days could only be enjoyed thus vicariously.

Here is another anecdote equally suggestive. In every farm-house was kept a "baccus" boy, *i.e.*, a boy employed in the back-house, that back kitchen containing the enormous large oven heated by faggots once a week, the kitchen proper being reserved for servants' meals and the mistress's domestic operations.

The "baccus" boy I remember was a waif and a stray known as one-eyed Dick. His employer's wife learned one day that Dick before washing up her dessert plate containing gooseberry husks, was accustomed with epicurean lick to swallow the whole. From that time Dick had his daily cabbage leaf of ripe gooseberries, and was strictly thus forbidden to rob the pigs.

Poor Dick! He afterwards took to himself a surname and a wife, and his eldest daughter married a "gentleman" *i.e.*, a person whose

avocations demanded broad cloth instead of corduroy, the invariable distinction.

These "baccus" boys, although ignorant of what I once heard called "the rudiments of reading," often possessed good parts.

One day a lady farmer took up a knife and showed her little scullion how to clean knives quickly and well.

"Ah, but, ma'am," retorted the youngster, "don't you know, *they're your own*?"

Here was a young mind proof against the most enticing theories William Morris and dreamers of his school could propound.

All very well for Béranger to sing, "Voir, c'est avoir!" This lad knew the human heart better than all the Fouriérists going. His retort was almost worthy of that little scullion immortalised by De Commines.

One day Louis XI., whose man-cages and other devilish devices are forgotten when we read such tales as this, went incognito into the kitchen.

"How much do you earn a day?" he asked of a little "gâte-sauce"* turning a spit.

* Colloquial, a boy scullion apt to spoil the sauces.

"As much as the king," retorted the smart lad. "By the grace of God I earn a living and the king can do no more."

The youthful epigrammatist, we learn, was showered with royal favours. A "baccus" boy would perhaps pronounce himself happy as a king. The rinsing of dried currants on baking days is a fascinating job when we have a handful given us by way of averting temptation. No less seductive is the carrying of harvest cakes, apple turnovers and Whitsuntide custards from baking-board to oven when we get hot buns and sugary odds and ends.

Ham-pickling also is an enjoying business for humble helpers. Now pounding sugar and spice in a mortar, now watching the spiced beer as it seethes on the hob, what an improvement are such tasks upon that of scaring crows or picking stones in a gang!

"Turtle's gang of stone-pickers" was a local institution, part of a system then in full working order throughout the country, and hardly less degrading than that of slavery itself. Turtle did not wield the lash, it is true, nor as Legree,

had he a troop of bloodhounds in his service; the shrill-voiced, evil-tongued, hard-visaged little man nevertheless made himself a terror to his bondservants. No other word can express the relation between gangmaster and gang.

Many a time have I watched that train from nursery or schoolroom window; little children, girls and youths, the mentally and bodily infirm, the decent and the disreputable—all these would be herded together throughout the stone-picking season, their labour paid by the piece, Turtle, the middle-man, exacting his pound of flesh, making what he could out of his contracts.

The moral atmosphere into which children were thus thrown may easily be guessed. Not for the more thriving and uplooking was such an employment. The chaste Sarahs, the poetic Bettys, the frolicsome Manettas, would have nothing to do with Turtle or his gang. But for the rest the temptation of a weekly shilling or two over-ruled all scruples. And here as elsewhere scolds and shrews, and perhaps worse feminine types still, were to be had for the asking. Stone-picking no more than turnip hoeing or barley

sowing can wait. Thus the ranks of the gang were filled by volunteers from town and neighbouring villages, no matter their character or career.*

It will be asked, what about schools? Were children no more sent to school at this period, than peasant boys and girls in France before '89? Well, yes, we had in my childhood one Dame's school, and a most benignant old lady kept it. Whether she could carry her scholars beyond the "rudiments of reading" † is doubtful. She taught little boys to say hymns and "make their bow," little girls their sampler and curtsey, which was something. Then there was the "Church School," a small room built on to the church, as much a part of it as pulpit and communion table, as completely under rectorial control as the churchyard outside. The teacher's salary, arising from what source I

* I believe it was mainly owing to the efforts of that excellent Radical the late Henry Fawcett that this system was prohibited by Act of Parliament.

† "How do you get on at school?" asked an aunt of mine of a little girl. "Thank you, ma'am, nicely in the rudiments of reading," was the reply.

cannot say, was exactly fifteen pounds per annum. Two schoolmistresses I remember well, both respectable young women, who could just read, write, and do easy sums. In these days they would pass no standard whatever. Boys and girls enjoyed such opportunities, advantages of improvement together; but as stone-picking and other labours of the field interfered with scholastic routine Miss Martha's task was not very onerous. Miss, did I say? Let me hastily recall the unpardonable slip. There were no Misses in those days, except at rectory, hall, farm-house and shop. Had even the black-smith's daughter arrogated to herself such an assumption of gentility she would have become general laughing stock. Master was the designation of elderly labouring folk, their sons were young So-and-So, their daughters, the girls Smith or Brown.

But to return to Martha L—— our school-mistress. A well-to-do farmer's son fell in love with her. Of course such a mésalliance was out of the question, not so romance. Every morning fresh flowers were surreptitiously placed in the

schoolroom window, till at last folks gossiped. With tears in her eyes Martha L—— complained to the rector that the neighbours sought to "impinge her modesty." Where she got that Newtonian predicate Heaven only knows. Had it come in a dream, when "deep sleep falleth upon man"? Be this as it may, the floral offerings were stopped, her modesty was not seriously impinged. In due time she became a matron with the rest.

Recreations were of a piece with moral intellectual and social conditions. A fair, a ploughing match, a travelling circus, such were the staple recreations. Whitsun Fair was a day of exotic dainties.

Regularly as the day came round the sisters F——, in new print dresses, set up their booth before the Wool Pack—our village possessed two ale-houses; here for degustation of carters, drovers and holiday-makers in general, stood saucers innumerable, each containing a ha'porth of stewed prunes, and in this dainty a brisk trade was done from early morning till dusk.

Why one especial regale should be chosen, and

no other candies or syrups, I cannot say. Year after year, with clock-work precision, appeared the new cotton dresses, the booths and the array of saucers in front of the Wool Pack.

Afflicting as is this picture of rural life from one point of view, from another, it awakens quite opposite reflexion. There was no juvenile smoking, no poring over Penny Dreadfuls, no betting in our village at this time.

The only criminal affair disgracing its annals throughout a period of thirty years, was a drunken affray, one young ploughman being sent to jail for three months. Poor fellow! Ill as he fared at home, he fared much worse in prison. When he came out he was mere skin and bone.

"I hardly liked to begin my bread and spoon victuals," he said, "for I always left off almost as hungry as when I began." Joyfully he returned to his "flick," *i.e.*, fat salt pork, his dumplings, *i.e.*, balls of flour and water, and "flet" cheese, *i.e.*, cheese made of milk that has been skimmed or flet,* a compound hard as nougat.

* Fleet, Anglo-Saxon, flët, to take the cream from, skim.

In colloquial speech a hatchet was needed for the attack.

And the last days of the farm labourer in the natural order of things meant "the House," with what comfort and mental stay a prospect of heavenly mansions could afford. The House, as the workhouse was always called, rewarded three score years of Spartan fare, life-long labour unrelieved by a single holiday, a harmless, ofttimes respectable existence, domestic duties admirably performed. Truly a retrospect even for outsiders to blush at!

CHAPTER V

LADY FARMERS AND OTHERS

Lady Farmers—Gigs, Toll-bars, and Matrimony—Pigs and Piano—Balls—The Cost of pulling a Neighbour's Nose—Contrasts—A Look Ahead

How it may be now I cannot say, but at the time I write of, lady farmers were found in our village and in most others—widows, sisters and daughters of deceased tenants to whom their lease had been renewed. Such renewal was secured by a clause, and an excellent provision it proved to capable women. Some landowners held back, preferring to have their property represented in Parliament, and this has ever seemed to me a capital argument on behalf of female suffrage. Tenant farming no longer offers the same guarantee, the lease of a good farm is no longer in itself a little fortune; yet we may ere long see an improved condition of things. Fruit culture, poultry-rearing, dairying,

may profitably replace the old-fashioned crops and methods. Women are sure to take advantage of the reaction. Why they should manfully keep the world a'going, support Her Majesty's soldiers and sailors, contribute to Colonial expansion, yet, like occupants of the Oriental harem, be subject to masculine law-making, has ever seemed to me directly opposed to common sense and the most elementary notions of justice. Women's rights had not as yet become a rallying cry. At the time I write of it was a common thing to see Mary Smith or Ann Brown, Farmer, on tumbril and waggon. My own name, as will be seen further on, has thus figured. But although we could all hold our own in practical matters and farm as high * as our neighbours of the other sex, political equality was almost undreamed of, mooted only by the few. Here I would mention the fact that women farmers never went to market.† Their

* To farm *high* means much more than to farm *well*, more initiative, more outlay.

† That is to say, they never entered the corn exchange. Mr T. Hardy's "Bathsheba" has often made me and many others smile. Her presence on the corn market is quite at variance with experience and the accepted order of things.

samples of wheat and barley in neatly sewed brown paper bags were exhibited either by male relative, friend or bailiff; nor did they ever attend cattle fairs, stock sales, or rent dinners. Here etiquette was rigid. But they got in their wheat early, kept their land clean, and sent prime sheep and bullocks to the fair.

In the house their management was equally beyond criticism. Thrift, method, above all, cleanliness reached the high water-mark. Sometimes the latter proved a thorn in the flesh; emulation became absolute servitude.

Nothing like a Suffolk girl for this excellent quality.

In later years I took Sarah C——, my invaluable Suffolker, to London and showed her Westminster Abbey. As she stood before the smoke begrimed time-honoured pile, she heaved a deep sigh, "How I should like to set to work on those black walls with soap and scrubbing-brush!" she exclaimed, adding regretfully, "but it would take too long to get off all that dirt." In Sarah's eyes London smuts seemed a pouring

out of the Seven Vials, a judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Alike for men and women with capital, farming was a fine business fifty years ago. To procure the lease of a good farm was as difficult as to get into Parliament, so folks said, and they were not far out. One riddle of local wit ran thus:—Why was Mr W—— (an octogenarian) like the Duke of York? Because he kept a Groom-in-Waiting; the said Mr Groom having the promise of Mr W——'s farm on the old gentleman's demise. Bankruptcies among farmers, large or small, men or women, were all but unknown.* Rents could not be called moderate. The corn rent, or rent rising and falling with prices, nullified the effect of extraordinary years; gentility, with its attendant outlay, was gradually invading the farm-house. Through seasons good, bad, and indifferent, the agricultural industry remained solvent. Nor can mercenariness be held responsible for such prosperity or at least solid circumstance.

* My friend and former neighbour, R. E. Everett, Esq., late M.P. for the Woodbridge division of Suffolk, said the same thing in the House of Commons.

The East Anglian farmer never or very rarely indeed thought of a dowry first and a wife afterwards. To marry for money was looked upon mean and low, a derogation of manhood. Such an offence against accepted standards was never forgotten. Any man who married for money straightway lost caste and consideration.

There was once a case in which such a sacrifice seemed of pressing necessity. Mr H—— E——, younger son, then middle-aged, of a numerous family of farmers, had been unlucky, a few thousand pounds would set him on his feet and enable him to hire a more promising "occupation," thus was a farm usually called. Half a dozen miles off lived the Misses S——, spinsters of known fortune and of reputed shrewishness. Egged on to the enterprise by his brothers and sisters, literally worried into the business of wooer, the recalcitrant one day had his gig cleaned, his harness polished, and dressing himself in his Sunday's best, drove off to propose for the better favoured heiress's hand.

Two hours later he was seen dashing homewards in a state of frantic jubilation. As all

the members of his family rushed out to meet him they felt that they could not misread the tell-tale front.

"Thank God," cried one and all, "it is settled!" The bridegroom to be, so they regarded him, threw the reins over his horse's head, lead animal and gig to the stable, then returned not as yet having opened his lips.

Once inside the house he burst out with unfeigned relief. "She has refused me!"

In after years he revelled in telling the story, no discreditable one either to wooer or wooed. The one had made no pretence whatever at sentiment, the other had honestly taken his compliment for what it was worth.

As has been already mentioned gentility was gradually invading the farm-house. For the most part farmers regarded wedlock as a step forward, but in the direction of social not material advancement. The gently bred daughter of a poor clergyman, a governess with superior ways, possessed far more attractions than money.

Many marriages were brought about after highly romantic fashion. I am here writing of

an epoch when gigs and toll gates were the order of the day, and these formed important matrimonial agencies.

On market days everyone who could do so of course went to town, *i.e.*, to their special market. In the genteeler sort of farm-house a governess would be kept, but as a gig only holds two persons, or at most two and a child between their knees, the young lady presiding over the schoolroom must either walk, get a lift, or stay at home.

A happy solution was offered by the toll-bar. Miss So-and-So had merely to reach the nearest toll-bar and there await a spare seat in some neighbour's gig, the spare seat naturally belonged to bachelor or widower, and thus it came about that the drive to market as often as not resulted in a drive to church. The modestly endowed young persons to whom I am indebted for instruction in "the rudiments of reading," all in turn became farmer's wives. Their acquirements were of the slenderest, but they could play the piano, with more or less propriety speak the Queen's English, and in

fine brought an atmosphere, rarefied and thin it might be, of "Shakespeare and the musical glasses."

Culture, or what passes muster as such, was as yet the merest infiltration, only here and there modifying social strata. The largest tenant farmer in our village openly avowed that he would rather hear the squeaking of pigs than the pianoforte! As, however, public opinion was leaning towards pianos rather than pigs' squeaking, he bought an instrument and allowed his little girls to learn.

It must not be supposed that there was any dearth of social intercourse. Farming folk were devotees of what one rustic pedant of my acquaintance called, "the Terpsichorean Muse."

In the winter everyone gave a dance, the guests driving perhaps fifteen miles through the snow, their gala attire packed in the gig-box, themselves well protected by enormous gig umbrellas.

Sometimes the roads were blocked and no one arrived but the blind fiddler, he, prudent

soul, well assured of a welcome, would generally appear the day before. A fiddle could do without a dance, but what in Heaven's name could dancers do without a fiddle? When no mishap of this kind occurred, right merrily he set a-going country dance and Sir Roger de Coverley. From seven in the evening till cock-crowing, alike old and young, footed it merrily, a wonderful supper, crowned by the inimitable and invariable tipsy cake, invigorating dancers and musician. That spirited old fiddler! I feel inclined to dance as I recall him now.

Very rarely whiffs of "Shakespeare and the musical glasses" varied the festive atmosphere. When this phenomenon did happen the effect was not always agreeable.

"Is it the custom in Suffolk for gentlemen to stand by their partners without speaking?" asked a pert young lady from London of her cavalier in the quadrille. The unfortunate young man coloured, stammered a word or two about the weather, and, it need hardly be said, refrained from asking her hand for another dance. This happened in my own home. "Unpleasant

little contingencies and delinquencies," as a grandiloquent neighbour used to say, "are unavoidable in the very best society."

All the year round social intercourse was strictly regulated by the lunar calendar. "The moon after next you may expect me," a habitual guest was wont to tell us. In Gibbon's Autobiography he alludes to the same custom:—"Dinners and visits (of neighbours) required in due season a similar return, and I dreaded the period of the full moon which was usually reserved for our more distant excursions."

Gigs would be got ready soon after the early dinner, arrival being timed for three or four o'clock; the gentlemen would take a farming survey, the ladies chat over needlework, at five o'clock tea, if tea it could be called, awaiting hosts and guests. The first course of this elaborate regale consisted of home-cured ham, that incomparable Suffolk ham pickled in spice, and harvest beer; harvest beer, itself clear as sherry and twice as strong, was drunk with this dish; next came the strongest of tea and the richest of cream with rusks, also a Suffolk

speciality, and cakes equally unrivalled. The tea things removed, hot water and spirit decanter would be brought out, pipes smoked, thereby apparently digestion being restored. Seldom did anyone seem the worse for such prolonged eating and drinking.

The moon regulated social intercourse and farming operations superseded the nomenclature of the calendar. Thus no one ever talked of spring and summer, autumn and winter, but of harrowing and haysel,* harvest and wheat-sowing. Fair days stood in place of Easter and Michaelmas, "the rent-feast," or audit dinner marked Midsummer or Christmas.

Urbanity and kindliness characterised these jolly farmers. Good faith marked their dealings one with another, a charitable spirit their behaviour as employers. During the long wet winter when very few hands were really needed, old men and "three-quarter men," *i.e.*, the feeble or undersized, were kept on out of pure benevolence. Some kind of work was found for them at reduced wages.

* This word is always used in Suffolk for hay-harvest.

Personal animosities were very rare. It was chiefly at electioneering times that "unpleasant little contingencies and delinquencies" would mar the general harmony.

Upon one of these occasions two gentlemen farmers had a fierce fight on horseback. Upon another a highly esteemed paterfamilias pulled another's nose. The irate victim of political rancour went to law, with the result that damages were assessed at five pounds. His antagonist thereupon sat down and coolly made out his cheque as follows:—"To Messrs So-and-So, attorneys, for wringing their client's (Mr William Smith) nose."

Humour varied the dull routine, life was sometimes viewed with Rabelaisian eyes. If the squeaking of pigs might occasionally be preferred to pianos, on the subject of a good joke opinion remained unanimous.

When in Germany, years after these early experiences, an old German schoolmistress thus expressed herself to me:—"Ah! those English farmers, Frâulein, with their red faces, great-coats and smart gigs! Nothing I saw in England

pleased me half so much as the sight of those fine farmers driving to market."

Fräulein Fink was right; there existed indeed matter for enthusiasm here. And who shall say? The wave of ruin that has of late years spread over agricultural England may disappear, the good old times may be repeated. America, Argentina, Russia, must in the far future have vaster markets than Europe to supply with corn. English farmers in all probability will never again eat bank-notes between their bread and butter as their forefathers are said to have done a hundred years ago. Perhaps the lease of a good farm will never again be as hard to gain as a seat in Parliament. It seems impossible to believe that the present state of things can last, agricultural bankruptcies of daily occurrence, thousands of acres to be had without rent for the asking, able-bodied men becoming survivals in rural districts, the great corn country of Eastern England, a waste!

CHAPTER VI

THE WORLD OF BOOKS

The Triune Splendour—Will Wimble—Nursery Saints—The Devil's Story-Book—Mrs Forsdyke and her Donkey-Cart

To have entered life in the words of Charles Lamb "an encyclopædia behind the time," is perhaps no unmixed evil. "So farewell, Horace, whom I hated so!" would never have been uttered by a self-taught student. "Hamlet" were surely not "Hamlet" to him whose acquaintance with Shakespeare should begin by working up the greatest play in the world for a Junior or Senior Local! Without doubt the acquisition of a school or college certificate nowadays represents something more solid than literary rapture, or an epicurean appreciation of "the dainties that are bred in a book." To the youth or maiden whom our French neighbours would describe as a struggle-for-lifer, such guar-

antees of successful cram have become indispensable, represent indeed, so much money invested at the best possible interest. The self-educated, moreover, may sigh in after years for some of the crumbs that now fall, not from the rich but the poor man's table. We who started in life's race modestly equipped with "the rudiments of reading," would fain have acquired one or two other things, to-day the accomplishment of workhouse foundling and street urchin as yet unbreeched. I suppose everyone of us goes down to the grave with some rankling regret, some unsatisfied wish. Mine will be a hankering after the Rule of Three. Had I but learned the Rule of Three, I should style myself, that rare exception, an individual picking no quarrel with his horoscope.

But there were compensations. The fine old manor-house in which these early years rolled by, contained a small but priceless library. My first educators—could any of mortal born chose better?—were the Bible, Shakespeare and Milton. Next after this triune splendour, this matchless trinity, came Walter Scott, the

Spectator and *Tatler*, "Don Quixote" (Smollett's translation), the "Arabian Nights," "The Vicar of Wakefield," "Robinson Crusoe," "Gulliver's Travels" and Boswell's "Johnson." Looking back I can hardly remember the time when these books were not familiar acquaintances. Before I was twelve years old I had read them all and again and again. Let me here protest against the assumption that the childish mind can be tainted by intimacy with the sublime masterpieces and delightful *chefs d'œuvre* here named. The born booklover seeks delight in imaginative literature, food for the fancy, intellectual beauty on which to dwell in solitude. Not in a single instance did any of these readings awaken a morbid curiosity or impure thought.

First let me speak of the Bible, a venerable folio with curious old prints and containing the apocrypha. Here, naturally, the poetic aspect appealed, the pastoral, the allegorical, the superhumanly grand. Being of a very practical turn, theology in itself, dogma, and revelation so-called, have never occupied my mind,

spiritual problems have always been relegated to a secondary place. The Bible was to the child as it has remained to the mature thinker, a great poem, a second world in marvel and beauty hardly behind the visible globe we inhabit.

The family Shakespeare (I have it still) is a Johnson and Malone edition in fifteen octavo volumes, published by Longman and others, 1793. On winter evenings when the family party were assembled in the keeping-room, * one little girl would become absorbed over a big volume in grey paper cover. She knew no Christmas trees, cards or gift-crammed stockings; juvenile balls, pantomimes and other excitements with which boys and girls of the present day are surfeited, did not come in her way. But rapture of quite another and more durable kind made ample amends. Not for the most dazzling memories would I exchange my first recollection of "Winter's Tale," read to myself in the family

* Thus the family sitting-room was always called, the best parlour being reserved for visitors.

circle, too absorbed to heed the chat of the rest, or snuff the candle at my elbow.

Moments as exquisite and unforgetable were afforded by Cervantes and Scott. The breathing into life of Hermione's statue, Dorothea at the brook, Norna of the Fitful Head uttering her wild prophecies, by such waving of magic wand was I ushered into the pleasure-house of Romance.

Milton may seem an odd idol of childhood, but perhaps on the principle of the "baccus" boy mentioned earlier, I adored "Paradise Lost" because it was my own. Some grown-up cousin had purchased the book for me, most likely attracted by its gay binding, gilt edges and pretty engravings. This edition of Milton's poetical works, published by Milner & Sowerby, Halifax, at three shillings and sixpence, contained Addison's famous critique and Channing's memoir, also some very creditable steel plates.

Pored over morning, noon and night, the volume proved in itself a liberal education, alike moral, spiritual, and intellectual. Not

for its weight in gold would I part with the somewhat tawdry looking little book in the crimson and gilt cover, now lost amid the more imposing array of my library shelves.

As beloved, but in quite a different way, are twelve small octavo volumes, the *Spectator* and *Tatler*, in their original bindings, blue figured paper, olive green leather backs and corner pieces, "printed in 1793 for J. Parsons, No. 21 Paternoster Row." How the young reader wished that every day could still welcome its *Spectator* with poetic motto or *Tatler* dated from White's Chocolate House, or "My own Apartment"! The wit and learning, variety of subject, genial temper and incomparable knowledge of men and manners, made these readings also an education, but unlike the afore-mentioned.

Whilst Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Scott unveiled the realm of Fancy, whilst Milton lifted into the lofty region of the epic, Addison and his goodly brotherhood initiated into the more prosaic but hardly less fascinating

precincts of literature in its wider sense, the universal world of letters.

Stinking weeds will find their way into every garden, and in this collection of masterpieces were one or two very bad books. The first of these ought certainly to have been burnt by the common hangman.

Some misguided relation had sent us for nursery reading, a little book by a certain Rev. Baptist Noel, called "Infant Piety." A more deliberate effort to render religious melancholia a juvenile malady, inevitable as measles or whooping cough, failing that, to turn tiny boys and girls into pietistic prigs of the most intolerable type, was never made. All these babies had but one concern, namely, for their souls, but one desire, "to go to Heaven." At two years old they would discourse glibly as a full-blown Salvationist on original sin, faith, good works, and regeneration. One and all died before they were fairly emancipated from crib and go-cart, and one and all made edifying end after the manner of Mr Peace.

I ask, what useful end could be served by writing such stuff as this? Have the majority of children, alas! come into the world invulnerably fortified against morbid introspection and religious mania by virtue of inheritance and natural temperament? Fortunately in the present case the bad seed had fallen upon stony places. Those odious little Davids and Abners—thus were they called—with their egregiously unctuous sayings and doings, were quizzed, smiled at, and speedily laid aside. Of a very different kind was the other work alluded to, and of which I have forgotton alike name and authorship. An appropriate title for this most immoral* yet vastly entertaining book would be not the sorrows but "The Joys of Satan." In a series of brief parables or apologues were set forth the easy triumphs of his satanic majesty, here no awful personage recalling the classic Pluto or the Miltonic Lucifer, rather a pseudo-Mephistopheles, caricature of the devil who so divertingly flirts with Frau Marthe in "Faust."

* Immoral in the sense that must be all works treating such subjects with the jocosity of the music-hall.

This out and out scoundrel—so human is he made to appear that the appellation fits—goes about his business in the most matter-of-fact way, tackling by turns sluggard, tippler, gamester, in fact everyone who from his especial point of view seemed a promising subject. Just as in "Infant Piety" the Unseen Power was treated with smug familiarity, much as if folks were talking of some favourite in black cloth and white choker and his "sweet truth preached last Sunday,"* so here every vestige of the supernatural was stripped from the incarnation of evil. Satan was simply an insinuating villain bent upon helping his fellows with all possible speed to prison, the gallows and perpetual burning.

The book was nicely bound in dark fancy leather with gilt edges, and contained numerous steel engravings. One of these I remember well, although the work belongs to early childhood and was never seen later, it suddenly disappeared, perhaps being hidden away of set purpose, perhaps being borrowed and intention-

* An expression I once heard after service in a chapel.

ally forgotten. The vignette alluded to represented sin in the shape of the Upas tree, under its shade lying the prostrate figure of some victim. It was an endearing cut and gazed at often and fondly.

Mudie's and Free Libraries were not as yet thought of, but the capital of East Anglia was ever to the fore in matters intellectual. Ipswich already possessed its Mechanics' Institution, the subscription to the same being half a guinea a year. For this modest sum subscribers could read newspapers and periodicals, and borrow several volumes.

The librarian, who possessed the noble name of Franklin, was a very shabby, dingy, semi-blind, semi-deaf old man, not always accommodating to omnivorous readers. Upon one occasion, a Saturday, a young man, a shop-assistant, addicted to light literature, could find nothing to his mind. "I *must* take home a book of some sort or another," he said desperately; "to-morrow is Sunday."

"Read your Bible!" growled the librarian in his surliest manner, and the devotee of poetry

and romance was sent empty away. To "old Franklin," as he was always called, seldom fell the uncongenial task of offering stones for bread or thistles for figs. The Mechanics' Institution of my native town,* one of the first established in the United Kingdom, was a golden treasury of wit and learning. The threadbare figure of its one-eyed custodian always reminded me of some wizard of fairy tale, uncouth porter of enchanted palace.

Books, donkey-carts and frail † baskets do not at first sight seem associable, but true it is that to this day the sight of a market woman in a country road transports me to bookland. On Saturdays the Ipswich butter-market was held, and a certain rosy-cheeked, blue-eyed old dame, with silvery hair, having sold her eggs and butter, would bring home our books and parcels. With what ecstacy I caught sight of the donkey-cart halting by our garden gate! With what eagerly

* I may call it so, although Westerfield Hall, my childhood's home, lay two miles off.

† Norman French; *fraile*, a basket made of rushes. In East Anglia, a large flat basket like those used for fish, and always called "a frail."

trembling hands the frail was unloaded! groceries, draperies, perhaps a leg of mutton, placed in layers; at the bottom, lying half a dozen books, one and all in that delightfully bethumbed condition so dear to Charles Lamb.

Good Mrs Forsdyke of the rosy cheeks and blue eyes! Little didst thou dream of the benignant part played by thee in another's life, that life as remote from thine as if one of us had lived under the Pharaohs! The honest soul, I daresay, could neither read nor write; old Franklin's precious burdens represented to her a few pence paid for porterage, that was all. But to me they were richest store.

With the parcels of tallow-candles, spices for ham-pickling, canvas for cream sieves, and the rest, came some of the best books and some of the best of their kind, ever written. Among these were Lockhart's "Life of Scott," Bruce's "Huc's Travels," Warburton's "Crescent and the Cross," and Melville's delicious romances, "Typee and Omoo"; in quite a different vein, Miss Martineau's stories of "Political Economy," Hallam's great works and G. H. Lewes's "History of

Philosophy," then appearing in a more popular form than in later enlarged editions.

Years and years after, when spending a week with Lewes and George Eliot in the Isle of Wight, I mentioned the well-thumbed little volumes and the butter woman's cart. He listened delightedly, as well he might. Not to many authors comes the satisfaction of what may almost be called posthumous fame!

But I must tear myself from a subject on which I could write volumes. The books of our youth, the friends who neither forsake us nor drop away on our onward progress through life, the silent yet ever present witnesses of man's better, undying part, how can we cherish these too dearly, too often renew the *immortelle*, offering of affection—the poet's tribute of a bay wreath?

CHAPTER VII

THE SOCIAL MEDIUM

The Grande Chartreuse—Lot's Wife—A Prodigal Son—A Catastrophe and a Coincidence—The Rev. J. C. Ryle and his wayside Blessings—"You've got the wrong colours, my dears. Go and change them!"

Twelve months' schooling may sometimes answer the purpose of twelve years, that is to say, stimulate the pupil's peculiar aptitude and thus aid a natural leaning to fittest career. If I here dwell on matters purely personal, it is because the subject of education, considered in its widest sense, possesses universal interest. My own opinion is that children of all classes nowadays run the risk of being over-educated. Those of quick brains educate themselves much more than we suppose; the slow and the sure should be developed practically rather than mentally, their faculties being turned to matters well within their reach.

Nothing is more inexplicable than parental blindness here. The brilliant one of the family, the intellectual gymnast, is often never heard of after school and college triumphs. The quiet plodder, set down as a dunce, will often become the mainstay of broken fortunes, perhaps shine as an inventor, suddenly become famous for heroism or genius!

By some happy chance the little day school to which I went when ten years old, was directed by a devotee of grammar in general and of French grammar in particular. Like another schoolmistress of my acquaintance, her belief was grammar, her tenets of faith were the subject and the predicate, the major sentence and the minor sentence. Daily she woke up to do battle for the predicate, daily she girded her loins on behalf of the major sentence. From the dogged purpose she put into these lessons, it might have been supposed that the fate of the British Empire depended upon the syntax of half a dozen little Ipswich girls. As my lucky stars would have it this admirable woman was a thorough mistress of French.

She had spent some years at Grenoble. An excursion to the Grande Chartreuse, no every-day adventure at that time, had apparently been the great event of her life. She was never tired of describing it, now throwing her experiences into the form of a little lecture, now dictating an account, now setting us the task of a narrative. The Grande Chartreuse gradually became a dream of marvel and beauty that must be realised somehow and at some time or other. By an irony of fate, when years and years after, when having travelled, re-travelled and re-travelled again France from end to end, I found myself at Grenoble, enthusiasm about the Grande Chartreuse was cold. Mountain roads and awful passes make me giddy. Of monks and monasteries I had already seen enough and to spare. So I left my fellow traveller to visit the long dreamed of site, myself spending the day with farmers close by.

To this admirable woman I attribute the pleasure with which I have read French from early childhood and the passionate interest

afterwards taken by me in France and French affairs. Miss Baker was not without sublunary reward. She soon after married a Baptist minister and set up a young ladies' school on her own account, I had reason to believe with entire success.

The nominal mistress of the little school in question was a widow lady with a large family. Her part of the day's business consisted chiefly in keeping an eye upon everyone and in quaffing at stated intervals tumblers of foaming porter brought on a tray. How a person so utterly incompetent came to secure one of the best woman teachers then living is a mystery. The first class had not much in common with the ardent candidates for a Junior or Senior Local Examination nowadays. The only thing thought of seemed some possible or perhaps wholly imaginary lover. We used to walk to school, a distance of two miles, and be fetched home by one of our brothers in a dog-cart. The elder girls would always contrive to get a peep at the dog-cart, its conductors transmitting by

our fifteen year old sister, poetic *billet-doux* in walnut shells, flowers or fruit. A niece of the austere Miss Baker headed the giddy band, no product, alas! of this especial school or town. When I think of these early days nothing strikes me more than the immense improvement in one respect. Young women may still be as sentimental as Lily Dale, as foolish as the girls of a garrison town described by Miss Austen. But they no longer flaunt their folly in the eyes of the world. They may dream of lovers, sigh for a lover morning, noon, and night, at any rate they would be ashamed to confess it.

Here I will mention another circumstance showing the curious notions of discipline prevailing at this time.

On our way home, on the outskirts of the town we passed a second ladies' school, one with less pretensions to gentility than our own. We often noticed in the winter twilight some girl's form standing like a statue just opposite the front door. It was not always the same girl, and oddly enough the apparition

seemed somehow immediately connected with bad weather. When a drizzling rain was falling, when a north wind blew and scattered snow-flakes, herald of winter, might be seen here and there, then we were pretty sure of passing the motionless figure. Bare-headed, shivering, abashed, there stood a well-dressed girl of fourteen or fifteen, doing public penance for some petty offence.

So much we learned afterwards. The image recalling Lot's wife was merely some boarding-school miss guilty of having giggled over Mrs Markham, omitted her scales, or perhaps made signs to the chemist's assistant over the way. And chilblains, neuralgia, consumptive coughs thereby induced seemed of quite secondary importance. Oh, time, oh, manners! These girls of the period, be it remarked by the way, were very insufficiently clad by comparison with their fellows of to-day. Not to go into too much details, I will cite one fact. A young lady belonging to well-to-do people once visited us in the depth of winter, of a Suffolk winter. Under her French merino

skirt she wore a flimsy white cotton petticoat, just as one would do in the blazing heat of July. Fashion and hygiene must have selected the fittest with a vengeance.

We had a little social circle. First must be named Mr and Mrs W——, parents of the unfortunate little Arthur. Mr W——, now practising as surgeon and apothecary, had been a ship surgeon in early days and had more than once circumnavigated the globe. He was a remarkable man in every way, small, almost to dwarfishness, with an enormous head, denoting that delightful combination, the man of science and the visionary. Ever soaring to the clouds, he yet had ever scientific light to throw upon passing questions. Fruitless chatter, gossipy personalities were impossible to him. He must illustrate the microscope or electric bar, dilate upon the excellent use to be made of thistle-down, or otherwise to diverge from the commonplace. Mrs W——, an Irishwoman, it need hardly be said, was in every respect his very opposite. She was twice his size to begin with, and very handsome. I see before

me now her blue eyes with their sweet vivacious endearing expression, auburn hair piled up in curls above the forehead, and exquisitely fair throat set off by a white linen collar and blue ribbons. Whilst her husband lived in the fairyland of science, she was all sentiment, her especial hero and heroine being Lord Byron and the Empress Josephine. One of her favourite books was Ganganelli's "Letters," and I believe she was a Roman Catholic, although she never openly declared herself. No one reads Ganganelli nowadays, but the letters are charming. There was an elder son I will call Ralph, who was grown up when little Arthur made such lamentable end. This Ralph, a handsome harum-scarum, had of course been fooled to the top of his bent also by an adoring mother, and as naturally had turned out ill. His father was constantly sending him out to some remote quarter of the globe; a few months and the prodigal would be back again, denuded of everything but effrontery and good looks.

Upon one occasion employment had been found

for him in the heart of Russia. Just as the snow began to fall at Ipswich Mr W—— accosted a friend with an air of extraordinary jubilation.

"The Neva is frozen!" he cried, rubbing his hands. "We shall not see Ralph back till the spring anyhow."

But lo and behold! the very next morning Ralph walked into his father's shop, nonchalant as ever. He had scraped up money enough to defray the expenses of his journey overland!

Upon another occasion he was shipped off to the Cape third class. Ralph might be a blackguard, but no matter how travestied, remained in appearence a gentlemanly blackguard. It was impossible to make him look insignificant or common. Among the saloon passengers happened to be some pretty girls who very soon discovered that the most attractive person on board belonged to the steerage. A flirtation ensued with the result that the first thing Ralph did on arriving was to book a berth by the next steamer bound homeward; arrived at Ipswich he

soon wheedled the money out of his mother for a first-class ticket, returned to the Cape in fine style, left his card with the saloon acquaintances of the first trip, enjoyed a few gay, idle, flattering weeks, then returned home, not a whit sadder or wiser than he went away.

In spite of these harassing circumstances, with no skeleton in the cupboard but a diabolical Jack-in-the-box, ever ready to spring upon him unexpectedly, the little doctor maintained a persistently cheerful demeanour; the kindliest, most truly Christian spirit, embellished, animated and enlarged that small square grotesque frame. Just as his prodigal could not be outwardly vulgarised, so neither surroundings nor company could detract from his own inborn nobility. He never lost an opportunity of lifting others out of the everyday atmosphere, or of imparting instruction. To one of his scientific hints I believe I owe the excellent eyesight I have hitherto enjoyed. "Never let the eye dwell on an unbroken surface of white," he told us one day, as he spoke placing a coloured wafer on a sheet of notepaper. "There," he added,

"break the surface by ever so slight a bit of colour and the eye is thereby relieved and saved from strain." The hint was taken by at least one youthful listener, and from that day to this I have followed Mr W——'s advice and used only deep coloured writing paper.

Quite different in character was the hospitality of this farm-house, and that, the drive to and fro being the principal attraction. In the parental gig would always be found room for a small third passenger, in whose eyes every scene made a new world. The style of these wonderful country teas has been already described, I will only mention one circumstance regarding them sufficiently strange in itself and of a nature to impress the childish mind.

A favourite jaunt, because the longest, was that to a bachelor uncle's, he the gayest, most mundane, least reflective of my father's numerous brothers. Returning home from market one dark winter's night, his perceptions presumably blunted by an extra "grog," this uncle was pitched with horse and gig into a deep pit by the road-side. Fortunately, after some time his moans attracted

attention, he was carried to the nearest farm-house and there carefully tended till his death, which happened from internal injuries a few days later.

On the morning after the accident an elder brother living in London came downstairs with a worn-out look. "Thank God, I am alive and well," he said to his wife. "All night long I was tossed about precipices and having my limbs broken by a fall." A few hours later he received news of his brother's fatal accident. This curious coincidence, for of course it was nothing more, created a considerable sensation at the time. It is hardly necessary to add that the spot in which my ill-fated uncle thus met his death, was immediately rendered safe by palings.

A wayside acquaintance showed his love of children in a fashion very different to that of the good little doctor. Instead of opening their eyes to the marvels of science or nature, this reverend gentleman—he is now a Bishop—as he rattled past in his high gig used to scatter tracts headed "Fire, Fire, Fire!"

"Why will you go to Hell?" and so on. Fortunately, the young ladies entrusted with us at that time were much more occupied with romance than theology. They pocketed the flying sheets, wondering all the while what would come of next Tuesday's drive to market. But to this day I never recall childish primrosing in Suffolk without a vision of the Rev. J. C. Ryle and his tracts.

Other and more amusing acquaintances were made on election day. We used to sit in a row at the open schoolroom window, from which hung blue flags and streamers. Of course my father, who had married a clergyman's daughter, was a tremendous Conservative. What a pageant it was, the voters dashing by in carriages, gigs and spring carts ablaze with blue or orange trappings, as the case might be!

I well remember one jolly farmer, what with his yellow scarf and waistcoat, looking like a sunflower. As he jogged past he glanced at the three little girls vigorously waving their

Tory draperies and shouted—"You've got the wrong colours, my dears. Go in and change them." Which I did very soon afterwards and for once and for all.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SOCIAL MEDIUM—*continued*

A QUAKER WORLD—A YOUNG QUAKERESS'S PIN-MONEY—CONTRASTS—THE STRUGGLE FOR GENTILITY: "ANYTHING TO PASS THE TIME AWAY"—JULES R——: A KEY TO FRENCH CHARACTER

THE Thee and Thou of the Quakers echo pleasantly across this long stretch of years. I seem to hear still the bland "How do thee, friend Matilda," of a venerable Quaker acquaintance of early years.

These "egregious enthusiasts," as Hume calls them, had long conferred a distinctive character on my native town. The most important, most liberal and wealthiest commercial houses belonged to the Society of Friends. The Nonconformist body was here immensely powerful, and ever — as elsewhere—in the van of progress, just as the

clerical world was invariably in the rear. But the Quakers, although by no means unsociable, formed a community apart, adhering to traditional faith, customs, and mode of life.

Both sexes rigidly adhered to primitive costume, although the younger members were showing signs of revolt. There were Quaker linendrapers, Quaker milliners, Quaker tailors. A sobriety, not without its poetic aspect, was imparted to these ancient streets by figures that might have shaken hands with William Penn.

With all their studied simplicity the matrons were very richly dressed. Of finest lawn their kerchiefs, of softest cashmere their dun-coloured gowns and shawls, whilst for great occasions they had an especial black silk, the like of which for beauty of texture and durability I have never since seen.

Young girls were condemned to a novitiate of the strictest economy, their gala gown, like poor Jane Eyre's, being a clean, well starched muslin. Among our Quaker friends were two

sisters belonging to one of the wealthiest families. These girls made no secret of their allowance for dress and pocket money. Each received exactly ten pounds a year with the gift of a new dress at Christmas. On this sum they continued to attain the *simplex munditiis*, the exquisite neatness, extolled by Horace; they would also contrast very favourably with flaunting damsels of our own day, who spend twice as much on a cycling costume. Already these two girls were unobtrusively breaking down the barriers, making innocent little raids into the region of coquetry. One day, a neck-ribbon suspiciously verging on rose-colour would be introduced; another time, something very like a flounce would be ventured upon. Restrictions of other kind were also resented. Dancing was forbidden in Quaker circles as "an ungodly shaking of the limbs," but nothing better pleased our young friends than a waltz or polka when away from home. Even the Thee and Thou were reserved by them for members of their own community. And as time wore on the

younger members of the Society of Friends fell away from its ranks, married outsiders, betook themselves to the world worldly and the Church of England!

I linger lovingly over one gracious figure that stands out conspicuously from these old memories.

The elder of the two sisters mentioned above was not beautiful, but possessed a distinction far rarer than mere personal comeliness. Her dark eyes were wonderfully soft and expressive, and from every feature seemed to beam the light of a benignant and noble nature. Her voice, too, was one of uncommon sweetness and feeling, and she spoke with an ease, clearness, and precision that deserved the name of an accomplishment. A first-rate horsewoman, her slight, strong form never showed to better advantage than on horseback, although there was witchery enough about the little white straw bonnet with plain ribbon trimmings and lilac and white muslin dress guiltless of frill or furbelow.

Young Quakeresses did not go to finishing schools, but they learned many things rarely acquired by girls of that period. Kate and her sister had gone through the first books of Euclid and could read Homer in the original, these exceptional endowments being very modestly acknowledged. Learning is doubtless a good thing, alike for daughters of Eve and sons of Adam. It might, however, be well that the unpretentiousness of my dove-eyed Quakeress were commoner among the young ladies who now "go up" or "go down" with their brothers.

As contrasted as well as could be with the sobriety, dignified ease and self-respect of these Quaker circles was another, that of a country doctor's family some miles off. This doctor was wealthy and had an enormous practice, besides "great expectations." There would not, therefore, have been the slightest difficulty in comfortably settling his numerous rather good-looking daughters in their own position of life. But no, the fond, misguided father was positively consumed by worldly

ambition. Having brought up his girls genteelly, and being able to portion them, he determined upon finding sons-in-law in what is called good society, that is to say, the enchanted regions from which, as a rule, country doctors were rigidly excluded. What a study for Thackeray was here! The worthy practitioner working at his profession as if for daily bread, after long drives across country making up medicines in his surgery, never affording himself the least little bit of leisure or distraction, and all the while dreaming of gentility, of that Will-o'-the-wisp, that Jack-o'-lantern, that maddening mirage now apparently within reach, now further off than ever. Upon one occasion the doctor was thrown into a transport from which he did not easily recover. He trod on air. In his case truly one might have said, joy maketh afraid. The wonder was that he did not die of heart disease.

His elder daughters, it seemed, had been invited to an evening party at a neighbour-

ing vicarage. Next day their father retailed the great news as he made his round. "The aristocracy helped my girls on with their cloaks," he said, with an air of pomposity that would have been ludicrous but for the glint of a tear accompanying the words.

Alas! that aristocratic helping on of cloaks was like a certain American road leading to a squirrel track, or that time-honoured parturition of the mountain. Nothing came of it. It must be admitted that beyond a certain limp, languid personal charm, the girls were terribly uninteresting. Their great trouble was how to get through that portion of the twenty-four hours not devoted to sleep. One of them was showing a new kind of fancy work to a friend and resumed the needle with a sigh.

"Anything to pass the time away, dear!" she said dolefully.

Year after year rolled by. As one class of suitors had been snubbed and another class did not come forward, the limp, languid

damsels became churchy old maids. They finally settled at Clifton, or some such place, where, doubtless, early services, clerical bazaars, rummage sales, and curates' company to tea, nicely helped to "pass the time away."

Refreshingly different from other early acquaintances was that of a Frenchman, a certain Jules R——, winegrower of Burgundy, who travelled on his own account. My brothers had made his acquaintance in Ipswich and he often walked over to dinner or tea. He was a very typical Frenchman, and an observation he dropped at this time has ever seemed to me a key to French character.

Speaking of his calling as vintager and wine merchant, he said, "I take great care not to increase my business."

Since these early days I have had a long and extraordinarily varied experience of French temperament and modes of thought. Jules R——'s simple confession of faith and view of life generally have constantly

recurred to me as throwing light upon both.

"I take great care not to increase my business." Have we not here an explanation of the social and economic problems that well-nigh drive French statesmen to desperation? Why is Algeria in reality a Jewish and Italian colony, French subjects not being tempted thither even by free grants of land and other bribes? Why is a tremendous money premium to be awarded the father of a numerous family? Why are French commerical houses, French hotels and offices filled with German employés? The national ideal is that of my childhood's friend Jules R——, a life of mental and bodily ease, an assured future on native soil, an absolute immunity from daily wear and tear. Apart from all other nations is the French; certain brilliant qualities and endowments alike of intellect, heart and brain, here attaining high water mark. But there is a danger that the Jules R——s, the type, the norma, will swamp the remnant, the higher-minded, more aspiring

portion. For when men take great care not to increase their business, no statesmanship can do the work for them. "One man can lead a horse to the pond; not twenty can make him drink," says the proverb.

CHAPTER IX

MIMOSA HOUSE

A Comparison — Accomplishments in the Fifties — Morals—Rebecca H—— and her Guardian Angel— A Schoolgirl's Religious Notions

I can but believe that one of the greatest changes of the Victorian era is a progressive moral standard. The incidents and conditions described in the following pages could not, I dare aver, be paralleled in the present day. In some matters we have gone back, in others, we have remained stationary, yet in others it is satisfactory to feel that humanity has undoubtedly become more respectable. Before beginning my narrative I will here put in a connecting word of explanation.

Family circumstances are of no general interest, family sorrows—no matter the intervening lapse of years—are too sacred for printers' copy. I will only say that when I was twelve

years old I lost my mother, a beautiful, refined and, for her day, highly educated woman. From that time, partly owing to domestic affairs, partly owing to the fondness of an adoring father, the direction of my life was left in my own hands. The direction was naturally not always of the wisest. Circumspection at so early an age would be abnormal; prudence, self-interest, would be equally precocious. But the opportunities thus put in my way had for result the first and vital stock-in-trade of a novelist, namely, an experience of life, a knowledge of men and manners as few possess on the threshold of life.

About a hundred years since the greatest of great novelists, the immortal Goldsmith, entered upon the career of usher at Peckham, a young Suffolk girl, modest aspirant in the same literary field, took up her abode as governess-pupil at Mimosa House, very near the site of Dr Milner's Academy. And perhaps, could the author of the "Vicar of Wakefield" have revisited this earthly scene and compared the nineteenth century establishment for

young ladies with that for the other sex familiar to him, his verdict would be in favour of the latter.

Another suggestion is here evoked. Who can say? Might not the sordidness and crushing ignominies of the Peckham Academy have occasioned that reaction to which we owe the idyllic tale of Wakefield? Certainly in the case of his humble follower a century later it was so. Mimosa House, with its unutterably low ethic standards and intellectual dead level drew me towards the ideal as to a harbour of refuge. On quitting those ever-abhorred doors, my first essay was in the field of pure romance.

Here I must explain what is meant by that now obsolete term, a governess-pupil. I was then to pay a small sum for board and lodging, teach the juniors for two or three hours every morning, and by way of return received lessons "from approved masters" in music, drawing and dancing. It may be asked, what in Heaven's name a studious and rather severe young person should want of a dancing master? The fact is, two maternal aunts, great authorities on such

matters, had laid it down as an axiom that "dancing implies birth and breeding." It was to please them that I had made the arrangement, an arrangement soon repented of; I very quickly renounced the dancing class for the piano.

The drawing lessons proved a dead sea apple. Twice a week a stout, good-natured lady, Mrs R——, came to instruct the young ladies in copying Julien's heads with crayon, and pencil landscapes with flat pencils, the latter accomplishment being called "the Galpin style."

No greater waste of time, no more complete illusion, could be conceived. The teacher knew nothing and her pupils learned nothing, no one apparently finding this out.

The music lesson was a solid, honest fact. Miss A——, the head partner of the school, had studied at the Royal Academy and was an accomplished musician. I am also bound to add that she very conscientiously went through this part of her daily routine. I never missed my lesson nor the stipulated use of a piano.

Materially the girls were not badly off; that is to say, they had enough to eat, did not suffer from chilblains more than was then usual, and took outdoor exercise every day. The pretence of the thing consisted in the utter want of education, either religious, moral or intellectual, the daily giving of stones for bread and thorns for figs.

Several of the elder girls, indeed, I should say the majority, belonged to a very low type. Vices with which they ought to have been absolutely unfamiliar, were openly discussed, and in language that savoured of the gutter, language new to my own ears as would have been the *argot* of the Quartier Latin. It will be said, my duty was clearly that of an informer, but I had nothing whatever to do with the first class. These loathsome confidences overheard by chance would never have been believed at headquarters. And the offenders were the most profitable of Miss A——'s pupils. Twenty governess-pupils could be had for the asking, but daughters of wealthy hotel-keepers were not so easy to replace.

Where had girls of well-to-do middle-class parents learned such abominations? The matter has ever seemed a mystery to me. No vile literature found its way into school lockers. Principal and head governess were propriety incarnate, the two servants were eminently staid young women. It would really appear as if in some natures evil takes root spontaneously, just as some plants become eaten up with green-fly despite the gardener's care.

This ingrained depravity was less shocking than a want of sensibility, rather, I should say, a callousness to which only Balzac could have done justice. And sad to say, this callousness, instead of being checked, was fostered, as the following story will testify.

Among the younger pupils was a little girl of six or seven named Rebecca H——, daughter of a neighbouring baker. Why this unfortunate child should have been signalled out as a scape-goat I could never understand. It is true that Mr H—— was a retail tradesman, and that instead of paying for his child's schooling, he paid in kind, that is to say, the

yearly sum-total was taken out in daily cart-loads of bread. Surely such a bargain was highly creditable to the baker and must have been far from disadvantageous to the school-mistress. The price of bread might rise or fall, little Rebecca's board and education cost a mere nothing, and meanwhile, from January to December, Mimosa House and all its hungry mouths were liberally supplied with the staff of life. But the other girls belonged to just a higher rung of the social ladder, and the treatment of Rebecca H—— arose partly from this reason, partly because she was a dull, plebeian - looking plain child, and doubtless partly because degraded humanity must find its victim, some ugly toad it would be delightful to stone if foolish sentiment and genteel manners did not forbid. The poor child was sometimes guilty of an offence doubtless due to physical infirmity, and here is an account of her punishment.

At eight o'clock, just before bed-time, all the girls marshalled by principal and head governess trooped down to the kitchen. There,

stripped naked, in a tub, stood Rebecca H——, exposed to the taunts and objurgations of the rest. For some minutes this disgraceful scene lasted, the chorus increasing in fury and volume. "Oh, Rebecca! Oh, dirty, odious Rebecca! oh, filthy Rebecca!" cried, howled, shouted these vicious lookers-on, the little naked figure bearing her martyrdom in stolid silence. Not a tear, not a cry escaped her, very probably her feeling being one of intense thankfulness, amazement that vindictiveness ended here, and that she was not beaten within an inch of her life as well.

A pearl may lie on a dunghill in fact as well as in fable, and among this dehumanised, unsexed crew was one angel in ungainly shape. Harriet A—— was a large-featured, muddy complexioned girl about twelve or thirteen, and with others of the first class, had a little boarder under her charge. Each younger pupil was mothered in this way, for there was no matron or wardrobe woman; the young ladies made their own beds, and two maids did the rest of the work.

As good luck would have it, Rebecca H—— fell into Harriet A——'s hands, and no fairy godmother ever showed more devotion. This unprepossessing, sallow, phlegmatic girl belonged to the category of noble women whose mission it is to protect every hunted down creature that crosses their path. The task came as a matter of course, by no means as a self-imposed duty. Harriet A—— with all her care could not make Rebecca look pretty and taking as the other little girls. Rebecca's hair would not curl, her Sunday frocks were plain and ill-made, the worthy baker evidently setting more store by learning than fashion, and the child herself was graceless and undemonstrative. But what mattered these things? Rebecca's very defects and disadvantages but endeared the more. Harriet did not want cent per cent back again with accumulated interest. She lavished protectiveness and devotion upon one in need of both, simply because the need was there. Were I to live a hundred years never shall I forget that picture, a picture to reprove humanity as the great lesson of Lear,

the little ill-favoured, plebeian, despised child and her equally undowered guardian angel smoothing her hair, making the best of cheap Sunday frock, all the while uttering little words of endearment and love.

The girls were of course taken regularly to church, once a day in winter, twice in the long days. Prayers were also read night and morning. There religious instruction began and ended. Not a trace of pious or even reverential feeling could I ever discover in any. Upon one occasion three or four of the elder pupils were discussing a future state.

"Well," said a pert little minx of thirteen, "I only hope that when I do go to Heaven I shall be permitted to carry my work in my pocket, or how on earth should I get through the day?"

This sally evoked a round of laughter. It is hardly necessary to add that alike head and under teacher were taken upon trust. No certificate of proficiency was or could be expected.

At the end of six months I quitted Mimosa

House, and from that day to this have never re-visited Peckham. Whether the big red house with the large back garden still stands or has long since given place to semi-detached villas, I know not. Certain it is that as a finishing school for young ladies Mimosa House of evil memory ceased to exist long ago. No less positive is the fact that we might nowadays search the United Kingdom through without finding its counterpart.

CHAPTER X

THE TWO DROMIAS

AMELIA B. EDWARDS—DAMP FIREWORKS—THE ORGANIST OF WOOD GREEN—MY UNCLE—STERLING COIN—A TWELVEMONTH'S READ AT A BOOKSTALL—AN AUTO-DIDACTE

ONE result of that six months' stay at Mimosa House was the cementing of a very close friendship with the late novelist, Egyptologist and founder of a Chair of Egyptology, Amelia Blandford Edwards. My senior by several years, my superior in knowledge of the world and in intellectual attainments generally, this first cousin and boon companion seemed rather an elder sister. Yet so strictly did we both adhere to the essential conditions of friendship, namely, a certain measure of reserve and absolute freedom of action, that, throughout an affectionate intimacy extending over thirty years, we never consulted each other about literary

work or business. Each went her own way unfettered by loving interference, counsel or criticism.

This excellent rule is, I feel convinced, the very basis of a good understanding; neither to proffer too much nor to expect too much, the principle on which hangs all satisfactory relationship. A true poet, who for reasons best known to himself, long ago gave up the lyre for the circulating library, has put this sentiment into four exquisite lines. Were they made of daily application how much smoother were the paths of domestic life!

> "Vex not thou thy violet
> Perfume to afford,
> Or no odour wilt thou get
> From its little hoard!"

Thus wrote George Macdonald, and hardly a day passes but one sees the subtle wisdom thus expressed set at naught.

In the case just referred to, only one matter, for which we were neither of us responsible, marred the intercourse of Amelia

B. Edwards and her cousin. This was that most unfortunate B with which our second names began, a cause of frequent annoyance and occasionally of serious inconvenience. As Frances Power Cobbe wittily said, we had each a bee in our bonnets, a bee that at all times buzzed most uncomfortably, and sometimes gave a sting. It was a case of the two Dromios with change of sex and circumstance. The prettiest possible compliment paid to M. B. E. would be intended for her namesake. Literary successes or failures would invariably be attributed to the wrong author. Alike the reading public and society in general blundered to the last. And neither of us could make up our minds to give up that bewildering B, the cause of all the mischief. Amelia stuck to hers for the sake of euphony, I to my own because Betham was my mother's maiden name and possessed literary associations.

Sometimes drawing-room mistakes occasioned poignant anguish.

At a famous literary breakfast, for instance,

I was introduced to an Archbishop, who began blandly—

"Ah! how glad I am to shake hands with the author of that charming book ——" My heart leapt into my mouth, for I had never in my life received so much as a poor little compliment from Canon, Dean or Bishop, much less from a Primate. Alas! exultation was short lived. The fireworks proved damp. "Untrodden Peaks and Unfrequented Valleys," he added, alluding to a work on the Dolomite mountains by Amelia B. Of course there was nothing to do but smile away his Grace's embarrassment and look for all the world as if my cousin's literary offspring were cherished fondly as my own.

Upon another occasion a musical composer sent A. B. E. a little poem copied from the pages of a magazine, begging permission to set it to music. Letter and song were sent on to me with the pencilled words:— "This must be yours; I know nothing about it." I returned both saying, "Neither do I; ransack your memory." Again the verses came back

with words to this effect,—"ransack your own," and unable to identify the piece it was forwarded to the composer. This gentleman, nothing daunted, betook himself to the British Museum, unearthed the original, and lo and behold, they bore my own signature! *

To the very last the blundering went on. A few years back a friend bequeathed me the sum of a hundred pounds. As she was both mentally and bodily afflicted, the transaction was entrusted to a hanger-on, one of those persons unable to care for any interests but her own. The legacy was of course made out in the name of Amelia Betham Edwards, and it was not without considerable difficulty that my cousin could convince the lawyers of the mistake.

And another, by no means laughable error, was made a year or two after that life-long friend had gone to her rest.

At the Hastings railway station an acquaintance catching sight of me drew back horrified as from an apparition.

* These verses, "Oh! would that Love could die," have since been several times set to music.

"I—I—I—" she stammered forth—"I read in the papers that you were dead!"

To the bulk of the novel reading public it was not a case of the two Dromios or even of the Siamese Twins. A. B. E. and M. B. E. were simply one and the same person.

About this time Amelia filled the modest post of organist at a little country church near London; for a generation and more ago, Wood Green, Hornsey, was far too rural to be called surburban. I suppose most intellectual workers have a dual capacity, a choice before them, not of Prodicus, rather of equally excellent and enticing paths. Be this as it may, a lady who attained considerable literary eminence, who wrote at least one novel that will long keep her name alive and ended her career as an Egyptologist of European repute, began life as a professional musician, and—can any say?—but for accident, chance, casual circumstance, might so have ended it, occupying herself with dominant sevenths instead of hieroglyphics, with fugues, fantasias, and concertos,

instead of the seventh dynasty, perhaps adding a woman's name to the pages of musical biography? She was at this time a highly accomplished musician, a thorough mistress of the keyboard and well versed in harmony and counterpoint. Some compositions for the organ belonging to the period in question show considerable taste and skill. At all times a tremendous worker, for years she devoted eight hours daily to the piano, other studies being pursued till far into the night.

It was a curious household, that home in a part of London, now pronounced quite uninhabitable, but, when Amelia's parents settled there more than half a century ago, almost genteel. I confess to an ineradicable affection for the proximity of Colebrooke Row with its associations of Charles Lamb, of Saddler's Wells dear to Shakespearians, of the sombre Irvingite church, and even the dusty little gardens of Percy Circus and Myddelton Square. Islington, Pentonville, Bloomsbury, these made up the London of my youth, and youthful recollection confers an immortality of its own.

Long before that stay at the Peckham School, a stay so barren of all pleasant experience, I had paid a long visit to London and become familiar with "merry Islington." How pleasant on summer evenings to stroll past Charles Lamb's house by the new river! How attractive the High Street with its fine old church surrounded by trees and green sward, recalling some market town far away! And the stir and metropolitan aspect of the Angel corner! All these have left inspiring memories.

The young organist's home was east of Islington, herself being a Cockney, born within sound of Bow Bells. My uncle was an old Peninsular officer, who had served under Wellington in Spain and taken part in the battle of Corunna. Slight and spare as a man could well be, tactiturn, austere and methodical to clockwork, he formed the strangest possible contrast to his lively, sociable theatre-loving little Irish wife. For years he occupied some post in a city bank, always setting forth and returning to the

minute, after tea reading the *Times* or some historical work with his watch by his side; at the stroke of nine retiring to rest. On Sundays he went every morning to a dull church close by, as regularly taking a walk afterwards with two elderly ladies of his acquaintance. The walk would be along the City or Marylebone road, never lasting a second longer than a stated time. In the summer he spent a couple of weeks or so with one brother or another, the life of the Suffolk farmhouse being his only annual change.

That attenuated automatic frame held a valiant spirit. On the breaking out of the Crimean War, my uncle, then considerably past middle age, sent in his name to the War Office with the words, "able and willing to serve." His monotonous, apparently joyless existence, was made exceptional by pride in his brilliant daughter. The success of her pretty novel "Barbara's History," shed a ray over a life that to outsiders seemed pathetic in its sameness and self-sought

isolation. Theatres, private theatricals, musical evenings, conversaziones were not to his taste. Most often his evenings were spent alone.

On Sunday evenings we used to take tea at the house of Mr Sterling Coyne (I always feel inclined to write Sterling Coin), the playwright, in Wilmington Square. There was an immense family of charming boys and girls, and after tea they acted charades or little plays, papa being stage manager. Sterling Coyne had a fund of good things to tell us, one of which I will relate. He was reading at a bookstall in Oxford Street one day when a friend tapped him on the shoulder. "Wish me a good journey and safe return," he said; "I am off to-night to New York." The friends chatted for a few minutes, then parted with a hearty handshake, Sterling Coyne resuming his book.

Twelve months afterwards he was poring over some volume at the same bookstall when again he was tapped on the shoulder.

"Good God, Coyne," cried a familiar voice, you don't mean to say you have been reading

three hundred and sixty-five days and nights at a stretch?"

It was the friend who had there taken leave of him just a year before.

Delightful, too, were the Shakespearian evenings at Sadlers' Wells, "As you like it," in which the parts of Celia and Rosalind were taken by the sisters Leclerc. The spectacular element was not then a foremost attraction. Theatre-goers were enticed rather by an actress's charm and skill than by the richness or eccentricity of her gowns. What an audience wanted was Shakespeare, not a historic pageant.

As these brief memorials of a remarkable woman need no apology, I will add a few more particulars. Very soon after this visit, the young organist of Wood Green finally relinquished a musical for a literary career. Already, when nine years old, she had gained a prize offered for a tale in a penny temperance magazine. Some pretty musical stories published in *Chambers' Journal* and elsewhere had followed at intervals. About the same time the two Dromias appeared as novelists,

the success of her first story deciding Amelia's future life.

A few years later the little household near Wilmington Square was tragically broken up. The old Peninsular officer and his wife died within seven days of each other, having just lived long enough to enjoy their daughter's early triumph. It was not till many years later that romance was laid aside for Egyptology, a dozen or so novels having been written during the interim. An exceptionally brilliant lecturing tour in America during the winter of 1889-90 was marred by an unfortunate accident. Amelia never recovered from the shock, although not a single lecture had been relinquished in consequence. In April 1892 she died, having by her will founded a chair of Egyptology at University College, London, and bequeathed her fine library to Somerville Hall, Oxford.

One characteristic has yet to be mentioned. As an Egyptologist she was what our French neighbours call an "autodidacte," *i.e.*, self-taught; and, indeed, she had taught herself

most things that she knew. "I can never learn of others," she once said to me, "I must be my own teacher and acquire in my own way." A more ardent, self-sacrificing student never lived.

CHAPTER XI

IDYLLIC AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL

REACTION—DRIFTS AND PIGHTLES—LORD OF THE HARVEST —BAIT AND BEVER—THE LAST WAGGON—THE BIOGRAPHY OF A BOOK—PUBLISHING OLD AND NEW

How refreshing the drifts and pightles of Suffolk after the prison walls of Mimosa House and the dust and glare of Pentonville! How refreshing, too, the naïve talk of our farming folk after the tittle tattle of low-bred school-girls! Here must be explained for the benefit of non-East Anglicans that a drift, of common usage in Suffolk, means an enclosed lane, and is probably an abbreviation of drift-way, a common way for driving cattle in*; Arthur Young, author of the famous travels in France, uses the word, but I am not familiar with its appropriation in this sense by many writers. Pightle or pightel, from pight,

* Webster.

an enclosed piece of land,* and in Suffolk meaning a little enclosed paddock or meadow, is used by that master of pure English, George Borrow.

The words have not reached my ears since these early days, but to see them in print recalls exquisite beauty and rapturous enjoyment.

Figure to yourself, reader, a long well-wooded lane or natural avenue, leading from field to field or meadow to meadow; in spring time its banks redolent of white and purple violets, in summer, its hedges a tangle of wild rose and honeysuckle, overhead stately oak and elm lending perpetual shadow, musical with wood pigeon and little birds. Except for occasional passage of lazy herd or tumbril slowly making way over grass green ruts, all is quiet and solitary. The drift indeed belongs to the farm, as much as orchard or potato garden. A delicious retreat when no young colts are disporting themselves in its precincts is the pightle, now a glory of cowslips, sweetest of

* Webster.

all sweet flowers, now of wild clover, pasturage of the bees. A breeze blows freshly even in July, there are no sultry days in my beloved Suffolk, and here also the idler would find himself alone. How delightful to lie cushioned on the grass, a favourite poet in your hand, or, following the poet's advice, your gaze fixed on the ever varying, ever spectacular heavens.*

That bygone pastoral, I am tempted to say pageant, has never been supplanted by richer, more varied experiences. With the reaping machine, the patent mower, the steam thresher vanished all poetry from cornfield and farmyard. With the improved kitchener, mechanical churner, and the inroads of gentility, farmhouse life has become prosaic as that of a stocking factory. But in former days it was not so. Hardship there might be, boorishness there might be, yet a bucolic spirit

* "Oh ! contemplez le ciel, et dès qu'a fin le jour,
En tout temps, en tout lieu, d'un ineffable amour,
Regardez à travers ces voiles."
V. Hugo, "Feuilles d' Automne."

And Tasso :—
"Mira il ciel com' è bello."—G. D., Canto 2.

from time to time reigned in these homely scenes, for a brief interval existence wore the aspect of Bacchanalia. Their ruddy faces gleaming like red hot coals against the golden sheaves, the lusty reapers obeyed beck and nod of the "Lord of the Harvest," leader chosen for his prowess, commanding presence, and high character generally At a signal from the lord all filed off to the nearest hedge for "bait" * and "bever," *i.e.*, eleven and four o'clock collations of harvest cake and beer, a can of the oldest and strongest being supplied from the farm upon extra occasions. Decency characterised the conversation, oft-times master and men sitting down to bait and bever together.

Meantime at home housewives were busy. Alike in farm and cottage huge plumpuddings would dance in the boiler, before the dinner-hour being taken up to cool. What a commotion among the wasps! No matter the devices resorted to, as well try to keep school-

* "Bait." "My lord's coach conveyed me to Bury and thence baiting at Newmarket."—Evelyn.

boys from green apples as drive away wasps from a harvest pudding. To this day the sight of a wasp recalls that savoury steam on the window sill.

But the crowning gala was the coming home of the last waggon. When both crops and weather had proved propitious, when farmer and reapers were in high spirits, and, above all, when the moon was full, this was a festival indeed.

Long before the procession approached joyous shouts and singing announced the culminating event of the husbandman's year, the prosperous gathering in, the happy close of so many anxious nights and laborious days. Louder and louder grows the chorus of untrained voices, more distinct the tramp of feet and rumble of wheels; then in the summer twilight, the harvest moon rising in full splendour behind it, appears the last waggon, to-day, a triumphal car decorated with green boughs and field flowers!

Is it to be wondered at that such scenes for a time held me captive? for a time

at least keeping me to early association? Any other young writer would I think have been influenced by a similar reaction; instead of describing school life as depressing from the moral point of view, as that portrayed by the great Bronté, taking refuge in idyllic scenes and ideal portraiture.

Soon after returning home I set to work on my first novel (some youthful attempts I had destroyed long before), and as an author's experiences after such lapse of years assume almost the character of history, I will give some purely bibliographical details. The production of a book, that is to say, the printing, publishing and circulation thus retrospectively considered, may be as interesting as the genesis of a book itself, always presuming that the work in question can lay claim to a genesis, is not merely so much "copy" paid for per thousand words.

I suppose that in the present day a young author's method of procedure would be as follows. First of all he would send his MS. and fee to the Author's Society; having ob-

tained advice, next try his luck with a publisher; if successful, again address himself to Great Portugal Street, get an agreement properly drawn up, signed and sealed, then betwixt hope and fear await the issue, criticisms, advances from other houses, editorial offers, notoriety, royalties.

Very different was a young author's position when a Suffolk girl then just twenty put the colophon to her first novel, "The White House by the Sea."

"Has any of you ever heard a more wonderful adventure than this of the hunchback, my jester?" asked the Sultan of his courtiers in Arabian story. And wholly irrespective of its virtues or demerits, this little book deserves a biographer.

There was of course no parcels' post in those days. Despatched to London through the agency of the family grocer, the manuscript was duly acknowledged and, wonderful to relate, very soon afterwards accepted by one of the foremost publishing houses.

I must here for once and for all make it

quite clear that I do not in the very least reflect upon anyone else but myself throughout the history of this transaction. The important, I may say, the only object, I had in view was to get my book well put before the public—which it was, my payment being in kind, instead of money, that is to say, I received twenty-five copies of new one, two and three volume novels. For a young writer the bargain cannot be called a bad one. My work was well printed, well bound, well advertised and presented to the world in excellent company. The curious part of the business is this; before me lies the original edition in two handsome volumes dated 1857, beside it, the last popular issue dated 1891. Between those two dates, a period of just upon thirty-five years, the book had contrived to keep its head above water, that is to say, had been steadily reprinted from time to time, yet from its first appearance to the present day, when it is still selling, not a farthing of profit has accrued to the author!

However, all is not gold that glitters, and

a writer whose first story has long survived a generation may complacently view the "boom" of a "Dodo," a "Trilby," or of the latest Kailyarder. What would you have? We may as well own to our little vanities!

An author's step first and successfully made there is no doubt whatever that his chances both of recognition and money were infinitely better in those days than now.* Probably to one literary aspirant of forty years ago there are five hundred, perhaps ten thousand to-day. Publishers were also a mere handful compared to their present numbers. They brought out fewer works and exercised more literary discrimination. Again, public taste had not been

* *Mr W. E. Norris on Young Writers' Chances.*—The home of Mr W. E. Norris, the novelist, stands on the top of Lincombe Hill, overlooking Tor Bay. Here is an extract from an interview with the novelist in the *British Weekly* :—

"Do you think that a young writer has a better chance now of securing recognition than when you first began to write?"

"On the whole, I think not so good a chance," Mr Norris replied. "There are a few authors whose sales are so enormous that they practically fill the market to the exclusion of others."

Mr Norris prefers the three-volume system of publication to the one-volume. "In three volumes a writer has more space and more freedom, and the book is much pleasanter to read."—*Westminster Gazette*, Jan. 13, 1898.

vitiated by the imitators of bad French models. Novel readers felt the influence of the great triad—Dickens, Thackeray, Currer Bell. Keeping up this high standard, came George Eliot and her worthy compeer, creator of the immortal Mrs Proudie.

Again, the good old system of selling a book just as you sell a house had its advantages. There was no suspense, no delusive waiting for royalties or half profits. An accredited author, despite the absence of newspaper syndicates, American copyright, and other advantages, had only himself to blame if he failed to amass a little fortune in those days.

The next few years were chiefly spent in Wurtemberg, the Free City of Frankfort, Vienna and Paris. There, too, as in Suffolk, conditions of life being very unlike those of the present day.

CHAPTER XII

OLD GERMANY

LIFE IN A WURTEMBERG SCHLOSS—AN ENGLISH ABBESS—THE GENESIS OF A NOVEL—FRANKFORT AS A FREE CITY

HARDLY more pretentious was the life of a Wurtemberg Schloss, my first foreign experience, than that of the Suffolk farmhouse left behind. Yet with what an exhilarating sense of novelty came those South German days, their atmosphere as completely vanished as the Suffolk of my youth! The Procrustean bed, called German unity, had not amalgamated a dozen charming little kingdoms, lopping off every vestige of spontaneousness and originality. Instead of the actual dead level, the Prussianizing of Europe from Potsdam to Stuttgart, a traveller formerly passed from one picturesque state to another. Wherever he went he found engaging naïveté of manners, costumes, speech. All this belongs to the past. Despite its literary, artistic and musical attractions,

Germany has become totally uninspiring, depressing indeed, to the freedom-loving Anglo-Saxon mind.

Railways in these days were not so common as now and the post-wagon or stage-coach conveyed us from Stuttgart to our destination, my fellow-guests being two English ladies, resident in the capital. The German post-boy was a striking feature of rural life, and well worthy of the poetic immortality conferred upon him.* My first acquaintance of this kind was a wiry little old man in bright orange coloured coat with very short tails, sky-blue trousers, and black, almost brimless, hat. Around his neck was his horn ornamented with green tassels, and this horn he blew upon every occasion: the martial blasts echoed back from the vine-clad hills, the intervening plain, a brilliant chess-board of flax, Indian corn, tobacco and beetroot. It recalled an artist's palette on which lie patches of green, purple, yellow, brown and

* I here especially allude to Lenau's well-known poem, "The Postilion." An English rendering of it in similar metre appears in "The Golden Bee," Dean & Co. It is a wonderfully beautiful poem.

blue. An old-fashioned open carriage, with a moustached coachman in livery, awaited us at the last post-house, and an hour's drive through alleys of fruit trees—such was the aspect of the high road—brought us to the Schloss, a gaunt building with low roof and turrets at each corner, its enormously thick walls showing engraved armorials. A mediæval moat or fosse now formed a belt of orchards, here and there little stone stairs leading from the first floor of the Schloss to the pleasure gardens below.

Nobleness of character and tragic circumstance take firmer hold of the imagination than scenes however far removed from common-place. To this sojourn in an old Wurtemberg castle belong memories as touching as they are strange.

The owner of the Schloss, Baron B——, was a widower, his two children being under the charge of an English girl, whilst the household generally, and indeed the business of the estate, were managed by an elderly relation, a most competent and estimable person, whom I will call Fräulein Theresa. Whether the Baron at this time held any official post or no I forget,

but the recent loss of a beautiful and fondly loved young wife was alone enough to account for his frequent and prolonged absences from home, perhaps partly accounted for some rare and winning qualities.

In some respects this country gentleman of South Germany was one of the most amiable characters I ever knew. Having been bereft himself he seemed anxious to solace all others equally stricken.

It happened that the young English governess of his little boy and girl was an orphan, one of several sisters, all earning daily bread as teachers in Germany. To these hard working exemplary girls the Baron had proved more than a kind friend and protector. Far too chivalrous to affect the air of a patron, he treated them as honoured guests rather than protégés. In holiday seasons the Schloss was their second home, his carriage, his table, his servants being placed at their disposal. Had they been court ladies from Windsor their welcome could not have been warmer, more gracious.

The young teacher of his children, I will call

her Erminia, without being exactly handsome or pretty had a face of singular sweetness and charm. At this time she seemed, as indeed she undoubtedly was, perfectly happy in her surroundings, with no cravings for the unknown, no wish to plunge into the vortex of passion or romance. As I gaze upon her portrait now it is difficult to believe in the sequel, to conjure up another vision, the quietly joyous, affectionate, practical girl transformed into a stern lady abbess, the whilom young governess swaying little children with grave smile or gentle admonition, now mother superior, austerely ruling a houseful of cloistered women, her frown making offenders tremble, from her sentences, however severe, being no appeal.

Two or three years after this visit I heard that Erminia had gone over to the Romish faith and entered a convent, intending to take the veil. And only the other day—after an interval of thirty years — I learned that she had attained the pinnacle of conventual ambition, namely, the position of mother superior and lady abbess in a large South American convent.

Strange to add, it was no love affair that had brought about Erminia's perversion from the Protestant faith and withdrawal from a wholesome, rational existence into the prison walls of mediæval superstition. It must be mentioned that she had a brother of her own, her elders were only step-sisters, and to this brother, of whom she had seen but little, she was entirely devoted. From childhood upwards the pair had agreed to make a home together in the New World. When at last realisation of these dreams appeared at hand, circumstances decided the brother upon a quite different course. He went his own way, married a wife, and Erminia committed a kind of suicide which nineteenth century progress has neither abolished nor succeeded in rendering generally preposterous.

Village life hereabouts recalled a page of Voss's matchless idyll, "Luise." Much was certainly needed in the way of tidiness and sanitation, but the cordial relations of chatelaine and dependents—Fräulein Theresa represented the Baron—the amazing fruitfulness of

the land, the equally amazing frugality of the people, made up for many shortcomings. And it must ever be borne in mind, that the most crushing of all taxes, enforced military service, had not yet crushed the spirit of the people.

Stuttgart itself was still in many respects a century behind the age. The town sewerage ran into the Neckar, watering the beautiful Royal Park, and every drop of water for domestic purposes had to be fetched from the nearest fountain. I think I see now my friend's old woman-servant bravely mounting to the fourth storey with a great tub of water balanced on her head.

Some odd customs prevailed. At the close of every season, the Queen's left-off dresses were sold by her ladies' maids and were much in request. It was a sight to see one piece after another of well-worn finery—for her majesty was economical—tried on, walked to the glass in, haggled over. And diverting to the Queen must have been the glimpse at park, garden, or theatre, of some familiar robe or bonnet. No one seemed to look at the matter from

a humorous point of view. The bargaining was conducted gravely. Faded brocade and threadbare velvet were complacently paraded.

From the little capital of Wurtemberg to the Free City on the Maine was a change indeed. The glittering Zeil, the equipages of Jewish bankers, the suburban villas, far outshone in splendour anything to be seen at Stuttgart. Here, too, the stamp of originality was much stronger. On every side, and at every moment, a stranger recalled the Frankfort of Goethe's youth, the historic Frankfort to-day as completely vanished as if swallowed up by an earthquake.

I do not know how things may be now, but at this time an English clergyman was stationed there by some society at home for the purpose of converting the Jews. How many Jews were converted yearly or if at all, I never learned, certain it is that the representative of the said society was himself the best possible argument, having relinquished the Talmud for the New Testament and the

roll of the law for the Thirty-nine articles. This agent of conversion had an English wife, and at the request of a common acquaintance, I was received into their house as a boarder. On reaching the pretty surburban villa, a curious reception awaited me. The initial greetings over my host sat down and, adjusting his spectacles, deliberately studied the new comer. He was a man of medium height, of unmistakable Jewish origin, and evidently alert dialectic mind. As apparently, the garb of an English divine was worn proudly, significant of the inner struggle and self-conquest of which he felt the right to be proud. Apparent, too, was that incongruousness and look of pathetic complacency I have seen in French priests converted to Protestantism and officiating as pastors. The tonsure and priestly aspect sort as ill with their new garb and office as Jewish physiognomy with surplice and pulpit, but such contradictions, even whimsicality, only strike observers. Fervency of conviction renders blind or callous to such matters.

The perusal over, having perhaps satisfied

himself as to my listening capacities and interest in psychological problems generally, he asked abruptly—

"Have you heard of the great scandal that has happened in the English church and community here, the history of Doctor J——?" On my reply in the negative he told me the following story.

A short time before there had appeared in Frankfort an elderly English clergyman, of noble presence and most winning manners, claiming suffrages for a self-imposed mission. This was no less than a crusade against Judaism in the city of Jerusalem itself, a winning over of souls to Christianity amid the awful scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary. No one could doubt in the validity of his plea or in the sincerity of the pleader. Dr J——, moreover, brought with him the very best credentials. His ecclesiastical status was high, and had it been otherwise, had wavering doubts arisen here and there, his first appearance in the pulpit would have quelled them for ever. With an oratory that could only be described

as electric, he took the congregation by storm. Women wept, men were shaken by emotion, and gold pieces rattled into the collector's plate like hailstones!

For some weeks the business of enlisting sympathy, in other words, of raising a fund, went on. Dr J—— became the idol of Frankfort society. He accepted every invitation, received the adulation alike of the devout and the worldly, repaid hospitality after regal fashion, with the costliest toy for bêbé, floral offering of rare exotics for Madame, choice little souvenir for Monsieur. The soberer of his worshippers regretted just a touch of worldliness and parade in this gifted and godly man. But had not St Paul bade his followers be all things to all men?

And did not princely ways beseem one of Nature's noblest? Women, one and all, from the titled dame to the washerwoman, lost their heads about this irresistible sexagenarian. Alike physiognomy, presence, voice, were pronounced ineffable, fascinating beyond the power of words.

Quite suddenly the bubble burst. As a

thunder blast in fine weather fell the blow. One morning all Frankfort was a-titter with the odious story.

Dr J—— had quitted the Free City over head and ears in debt, fleeing from dishonour, perhaps a debtor's prison. Needless to add that the little fortune collected for the conversion of Jerusalem had been squandered upon himself and his uncalled-for generosities. Such was the genesis of "Dr Jacob,"* and the story with its picturesque surroundings might well have proved the genesis of a novelist as well; who could have helped putting it upon paper? And who, having known Frankfort as a Free City, would care to revisit it now? Not even Dannecker's "Ariadne" nor Del Piombo's superb portrait could tempt me thither again.

In the days I write of the Zeil and the Zoological gardens were spectacular with colour and costume; the Frankfurter officers in their dark green and red uniforms, the Bürgermaster's equipage with its armorial bearings, gorgeous trappings and coachmen in cocked

* First edition 1864, latest 1897.

hats, and blue, gold-braided coats, the municipal police, so affable to strangers, the civic insignia on public officers—all these belong to a past, the Prussian helmet here as everywhere symbolizing military rule, the maximum of encroachment upon individuality and the claims of human development.

CHAPTER XIII

OLD VIENNA

The Private Physician of Prince Metternich—A Pupil of Jenny Lind—Contrasted Splendour and Barbarism—Political Stagnation—The Exodus—Farewell

Six months of the year 1862 were divided between Vienna and Frankfort, my second sojourn in the latter place being under a German roof for the purpose of perfecting myself in the language. Of old Vienna and Viennese society in the sixties, some reminiscences may be acceptable.

The arrangements for this stay were highly advantageous and at the same time peculiar. Through the medium of German friends, I secured rooms and attendance under the roof of an eminent physician, formerly Leibarzt or body physician to Prince Metternich, the famous diplomat. There was no promise of hospitality or companionship on the part of Dr von J——'s wife and daughter, only an understanding of

protection, advice as to German masters, and so on. But when this charming family found that their English tenant was an unobtrusive, studious girl, bent upon making the most of her opportunities, nothing could exceed their attention and kindness. A cover was constantly laid for me at the elegant little three o'clock dinner and simple "abendbrod," or supper. I was invited to join them in visits to suburban friends, whilst the doctor and his daughter took pains to show me all the splendid historic and artistic marvels of the capital.

Dr von J—— was a tall, aristocratic looking man of seventy-two, who might well have been a prince and a diplomat himself. He belonged to the old school of politicians, entertained a supreme aversion to English statesmanship and theories of government, often twitting me about Kossuth and Mazzini, but frankly confessed his liking for the English individually. His wife, a benignant old lady, remained at home knitting stockings and reading Goethe, whilst the Imperial Councillor dined off gold and silver at royal and ducal palaces. Their

only daughter Augusta, had attained the age of thirty without entering upon the marriage state. She had a plain, beautiful face,* that is to say, whilst wanting symmetry of feature and bloom of complexion, she possessed that rare adorable loveliness, the beauty of soul and music. Instead of endowing her with laughing eyes, dimpled cheeks, and a mouth made for lover's kisses, Nature had bestowed a voice of marvellous power and sweetness and a character to match. This treasure of a voice was trained by Jenny Lind herself, but the daughter of an Imperial Councillor and Princely Leibarzt could not of course become a prima donna. So Auguste von J—— sang for love and not for money or fame, taking part in concerts given for the poor or performing the solos at churches where any especial collection was to be made for charitable purposes. Never off the stage or on it have I heard a voice to be compared

* This is no oxymoron or contradiction of terms. Some very handsome faces are ugly from sheer want of expression, or expression of depravity, and *vice versâ*.

to hers; especially in the *Ave Maria* of May, the Catholic month of Mary, was her singing indescribably moving, wholly phenomenal in its pathos and rich vocal quality. Dear Augusta! How came it to pass that we who once loved each other so fondly, should so soon and so completely have faded out of each other's life? The portrait of her passionately musical face is all that reminds me now of this cherished friendship.

One's first impression of Vienna at this time —just a year before the fiendish Haynau's Polish Terror—was of contrasted splendour and barbarism. On arriving at my destination, the woman servant told off to wait upon me almost prostrated herself as she kissed my hand in token of subservience. This slavish* act I need hardly say was not repeated. Nor would I ever address serving folk with the contemptuous thee and thou then in vogue.

But other contrasts were far more shocking.

* Not perhaps so considered. At this time children here always kissed the hands of their elders when taking leave.

In the poorest Suffolk farmhouse familiar to me, alike ploughmen, who used to be boarded and lodged as I have before mentioned, and dairymaids, had ever their bedchambers, the latter being lodged close to master and mistress. The accommodation was humble but decent; a good bed, washstand, pegs for clothes, and cupboard. Will it be believed that at the time I write of, *i.e.*, only a generation ago, domestic servants in rich Viennese households slept like cats and dogs where they could? For some time after my installation in the von J——'s handsome and spacious flat, I was puzzled by certain noises outside my door late at night and very early in the morning. I soon unearthed the mystery. When the family had retired to rest the Vorsaal or entrance-hall was strewed with mattresses and rugs, and here slept the three or four maids composing the household.

At dawn, as quietly as might be, the bedding was cleared away, the Vorsaal swept and scoured, elegant lamps, hatstands, and other pieces of furniture replaced, not a vestige

remaining of the bivouac. We English, I admit, are a very boastful race. There is no denying that fact. I must aver, however, that the English nation may well be proud of two inventions—that of the bedchamber and of another and smaller apartment, which shall here be nameless.

That arch-despot and arch-voluptuary Louis XIV. was as utterly without a sense of decency as a cannibal king. The women of his hareem were no better off when lying-in than itinerant tinkers' wives. In the very height of her ascendancy Louis de la Vallière was brought to bed in a landing or passage of general use. "Pray be quick and bring the child into the world," she groaned to her accoucheur; "lots of people will be passing presently." *

But neither had Viennese ladies anything to be called a bedchamber. Fräulein Augusta's room was as completely transformed, night and morning, as the entrance-hall; by dint of shut-up washstand, sofa-bed and other

* See "Louise de la Valliere." A. Sorel, Paris.

ingenious devices turned into a boudoir. One might suppose from the care taken to disguise the fact, that sleep, the business of the toilette, and other bodily exigencies, were brands of infamy, so many marks of Cain to be hidden, if possible, ignored.

The von J——s were good, kind, charming people, but autocratic to the core, and saw no more harm in servants sleeping on the floor than in rinsing the mouth publicly at dessert; a small tumbler was always placed in the finger-glasses for this purpose.

How can one fix the criterium of good manners? A Viennese girl just returned from England had been equally shocked by an insular habit, that of ladies entering a drawing-room without lifting their veils.

"If I kept my veil down when paying a visit here," she said, "I should expect to have it torn from my face."

Yet, I daresay, this acquaintance felt no scruple whatever about her housemaid sleeping on the mat in the corridor!

Whilst the Rotten Row and Hyde Park of

Vienna showed a parade far outshining that of London, the ramparts, then in course of demolition, were scenes of poverty and toil, hardly to be matched in any European capital. As the afternoon wore on the Graben would be deserted for the Prater, culminating point of brilliance and gaiety. Now the Emperor drove past in a showy carriage drawn by six white horses, the postilions having orange-coloured livery. Now appeared a gallant and popular figure, doomed to unutterably tragic end. I allude to the Archduke Maximilian, Prince Max, as he was then called, victim of that simulacrum of the greatest criminal who ever lived, the third Napoleon. The Lichtenstein equipage, with its footmen in scarlet and flowing sashes, was conspicuous; equally so were the Esterhazy trappings and liveries; Hungarian nobles, with servants plumed and booted, their ladies wearing black lace headgear, braided cloaks of military pattern, and mittens; Polish lancers, elegant Viennese in the latest Parisian toilettes—all these made up a daily pageant.

But the other side of the picture? From sunset to sunrise, myriads of Sclavonic peasants were at work on the ramparts, aged men and women, boys, girls, little children manipulating pickaxe and barrow under the broiling sun, earning a few kreutzers by dint of twelve hours' labour. Already in May the heat is tropical here, and the rich and well-to-do retire to the country. These poor people remained at their post, many dying of sunstroke. That demolition of the ramparts and turning them into pleasure-grounds always recalls to my mind the building of the Pyramids. The poor Sclavonians were not slaves, it is true, otherwise the comparison held good. Their look of patient, dogged wretchedness and resignation haunt me still.

At this time Austrian finances were in a very ominous state. Paper money did duty for coinage. Halfpenny banknotes were issued and I long preserved one of these curiosities. Yet luxury and pleasure were the order of the day. Even the peasants kept holiday at fair-time, flocking to the Würstl Prater, indulging in a

mug of beer and kreutzerworth of cheese, the latter being advertised by hawkers, finding another kreutzer for Punch and Judy or the mountebank. Curiously enough the old Imperial Councillor, cultivated as he was, and aristocratic as he was, enjoyed nothing so much as these popular amusements. He became a boy on entering the Prater, his eyes would twinkle merrily at sight of a puppet theatre, with an epicurean smile he would drop one lump of sugar after another into his iced coffee.

My kind friends wished me not only to see but to realise the life of the capital, and some of these experiences deserve mention.

The court and society dined at three o'clock, but the work-a-day world at midday. Restaurants were crowded then and, each had an upper and lower dining-room; the first splendidly furnished, in charge of smart waiters and offering a dinner of seven or eight courses; the second was conducted on a very different scale, the motley attendants had dingy napkins swung

over the shoulder, folks were at liberty to smoke, spit on the floor, order a single dish and proffer a halfpenny banknote by way of tip.

The daughter of an Imperial Councillor could not, of course, dine at a city restaurant; my own case was different. A neatly-dressed, demure young Englishwoman, so the von J——s said, could go anywhere. And with satisfaction it is to be noted that although I dined alone at one popular restaurant after another, never in a single instance was I treated with anything but politeness and consideration. The same may be said of the people generally. Nowhere and under no circumstances could a young foreign girl enjoy greater freedom and safety. I remember upon one occasion having somewhat rashly accompanied a countrywoman to the opera. We returned home at midnight on foot, parting company on the way. Neither of us had the least occasion to regret the adventure. Vienna was certainly well, in some respects far too well, policed.

At this period, politics formed no prominent interest of life, yet I could not help contrasting

the conversation of men like Dr von J—— and his associates with the after tea talk of Suffolk farmers. These highly-cultured Austrian gentlemen avoided political discussion just as Germans do now, because speech no more than the press was free.

I was especially struck by this fact when paying a visit with the von J—— family to their friend Prince E——y in his summer Schloss, just outside Vienna. It is a fairy-like place, veritable palace of art, treasure-house of statuary, pictures and exotics. On every side is heard rippling fountains and rustling rose-leaves, in so far as possible we are made to feel out of doors. As we wandered amid these enchanted scenes the Prince and Imperial Councillor chatted in animated, argumentative strain. Not an allusion to politics escaped their lips. Yet the political situation at that time was full of interest. Another anomaly struck an English stranger. In these polished, highly-cultivated social circles, it was ever the hostess or her daughters who served their guests, proffering

coffee, handing round "butter-brod" or apple-cakes, whilst the men of the party complacently kept their seats.

Despite these little drawbacks how charming was this home-life in the Schottenhof! Sometimes we took tea with friends amid the vineyards and cornfields of Dôbling, sometimes we kept holiday on the Kahlenberg, dining in sight of that wonderful panorama, the blue, far-off Carpathians, the dim spires of Presburg, the blood-stained plain of Asperg, the broad, bright Danube, with its wooded islets and ruin-crested banks afar; under our feet, St Stefans and the suburbs and pleasure gardens of Vienna. The hot winds of early summer put an end to my stay. Before May was out the great exodus from the city began. Rich people fled to the Tyrol; humbler folks, carrying furniture and bedding with them, established themselves in outlying villages. Only the commercial world and the poor remained behind.

My kind hosts had arranged for me to visit friends and relations at Gmunden and in the neighbourhood of Salzburg. By their advice

I booked a place by steamer to Linz, and at seven o'clock one brilliant June morning took tearful leave of Augusta von J—— on the quay. I never again saw that dearly-loved friend or revisited Vienna.

CHAPTER XIV

MIGHT HAVE BEENS

David Swan—Shadows of Death—Love—Wealth—The Dromias in Conference—My Miss Browne

From some points of view I have ever regarded Nathaniel Hawthorne as the greatest story-teller who ever lived. One of his subtlest tales, "David Swan, a Fantasy," must occur to everyone when reviewing the past. It is an illustration of the oft-repeated "might have been," the daily touch and go of unseen destiny, the pitch and toss of invisible circumstances, chances, forces, call these what we will, the innumerable accidents that, unknown to ourselves, determine the bent of our career.

"We are but partially acquainted," wrote the wizard of romance, "even with the events which actually influence our course through life and our final destiny. There are innumer-

able other events, if such they may be called, which come close upon us, yet pass away without actual results, or even betraying their near approach, by the reflection of any light or shadow across our minds. Could we know all the vicissitudes of our fortunes, life would be too full of hope and fear, exultation or disappointment, to afford us a single hour of true serenity." David Swan, a youth of twenty, on his road to Boston lies down and falls sound asleep. When he awoke he knew not that Wealth, Love and Death had each in turn claimed him for his own. A rich elderly couple all but made up their minds to arouse the comely lad and adopt him; a wealthy country lass fell in love with the sleeper, and had he only waked up, most likely an acquaintance would have ended in wedlock; next came a couple of highwaymen, who opened his bundle, ready to use their knives if its owner so much as stirred.

Not to all have befallen the romantic sleep of David Swan, but hardly less strange the fortunes or misfortunes we are aware of hav-

ing just missed. Three occurrences that followed my stay in Vienna recall those passing visitants in Hawthorne's tale, Wealth, Love, Death, although they did not come in the same order, nor invisibly. Youth is proverbially fearless, English girlhood eminently self-protective and independent. Thus it comes about that the quiet, timorous chronicler of these pages, meekest of silvery-haired little ladies, who would now not for worlds take a two-mile walk on a country road unaccompanied, as a girl confronted daring adventure with the happiest unconcern, defiant of danger, no matter what shape it wore. And certainly the worst ills and crowning checks of existence are consoled by the reflection :—I have lived my life. Life, the great teacher in me found an alert pupil, has no more to teach!

The Austrian Tyrol was not at that time as in the present day overrun with tourists, Cook had not turned the world into a vast raree-show, picturesque Europe into one enormous Hampstead Heath on Whit-Monday. Instead therefore of traversing the Salzkammergut with

crowds of English and American excursionists, it happened that I was the solitary fare of *post-wagen,* or stage-coach, and its ill-favoured driver.

By four o'clock in the morning I was bidden to take my seat, and I well remember two unpropitious circumstances of the start. The hotel recommended by my friend was on the outskirts of the town, so that it was necessary to be up betimes. Unfortunately I had forgotten to reserve my thick walking shoes and in my search for the "Boots," discovered the kind of accommodation provided for these obliging men-of-all-work. The poor fellow here had only the floor for a bed, sleeping on some old coats in an open landing place amid his boots and blacking brushes.

The starry twilight of the summer morning was disturbed by another unpleasant impression. In a lonely suburban street I came upon two lads cruelly ill-treating a poor little calf. Time pressed, I could only pause for a momentary remonstrance, then hurried on. On reaching

the post-house, however, I found that punctuality was not then a feature of His Imperial Majesty's mails. For an hour at least I waited on a bench outside the inn, fortunately obtaining a cup of coffee. When at last we did set off, I discovered that I was to be the only passenger. The fact hardly seemed worth a second thought, but as the day wore on, circumstances lent it an eerie aspect. Our way led through scenes of unimaginable beauty, wildness and grandeur; soon the cattle bell of little lawny valleys was heard no more, the far-off hamlets catching the earliest sunbeam vanished, instead came mountain gorges, forests of gigantic pine, the glimpse of chamois on inaccessible peaks, the flash of eagle's wings across the fitfully bright heavens, the roar of torrent and cascade.

To heighten the sublimity of these scenes, sublimity I have never seen excelled in my various travels, European, African, Asiatic, there came on one of these terrific storms so common in Alpine regions, thunder and lightning, followed by a very deluge of rain. Whether

so much as an evil thought crossed the mind of my ill-visaged conductor I know not. Certain it is that for some reason or other, from time to time he did pull up, bend down, and eye me with a strangely sinister look. Certain it is also that, although at this time I did not know what fear was, the thought struck me, were I here robbed, maltreated and thrown into the nearest mountain torrent, who would be the wiser?

But the awful, unforgetable journey came to a safe end. Whether or no, like David Swan, it had nearly been my last, remains mythical.

A few days later I was at Munich, on my way to Erminia and her sisters. Having some hours to spare I naturally utilised them after an English girl's fashion in seeing all that I could. What was my consternation on finding myself in the Cathedral face to face with a Salzburg acquaintance of the other sex, a Hungarian patriot, not to be dismissed with a cold inclination of the head or mere how d'ye do and good-bye.

The nation of Kossuth, as well as that of Kosciusko, must ever appeal to an enthusiastic mind. Exile shared with a victim of despotism can but wear an enticing aspect in the eyes of a romantic girl. And foreign love-making has charms of its own.

As we recall certain scenes from the dissolving views of life, we may well here and there ask ourselves, are we not deceived, surely yonder tableau belongs to another? Yet every detail of that strange interview is fresh in my memory as if it had happened but yesterday—the stroll round the cathedral, the groups of English tourists encountered there, the last half hour in the railway restaurant. I could to-day put my hand on the very table at which we sat thirty and odd years ago, and as there is ever a vein of comedy running through the sober texture of life, I smile as I did in secret then, at certain incongruities; the bare wine-stained table, the tall glass mug of beer, the black bread and cold sausage off which I supped whilst listening to outpourings fervid as any

ever poured into a maiden's ear. Perhaps no one noticed us, for the restaurant was crowded, but the fact of publicity did not at all affect the desperate lover. My train for Stuttgart was nearly due, time pressed, and there was so much to say! Prudence however got the better of impulse. Like David Swan I continued my journey fancy-free; instead of accepting Hungarian nationality and a home in the new world I pursued a literary calling at home.

A few days later came the third "might have been," no mere Will-o'-the-Wisp, but a reality tangible to the grasp.

The two Dromios, I should say Drom*ia*s, sat in a hotel at Heidelberg in gravest conference.

"My darling Dromia," said the first, she was fond of endearing epithets, "my own Dromia, do not accept. Keep your freedom. Return to Suffolk. Go your own way. Let that delightful" (I am not sure that she did not add another expletive beginning with the same letter)—"Let that delightful Miss Browne go!"

Excellent advice! advice which coincided with my own notions, and which yet, strange to say, the first Dromia had not acted up to in similar case herself. The Miss Browne in question, I forget her real name, was one of those "sweet little women of fifty," to quote George Macdonald, who by the thousand travel with maid and courier, and who, in spite of wealth, freedom, and a certain amount of culture, occasionally find existence just a trifle dull. There was no mistake, no veneer about my Miss Browne. She was exactly what she appeared to be, nothing more nor less than an amiable, well-bred, mildly interesting lady possessed of a handsome fortune.

The high spirits and immense capacity for enjoyment of the two Dromias had taken her fancy, and as the brilliant number one was already adopted, she professed herself ready to be content with the more commonplace number two; in other words, I had only to make myself agreeable and the best of everything material, horses, carriages, good dinners, foreign travel, were mine for the rest of my days.

But the alluring bait was refused. With David Swan I trudged on, depending upon my own resources. Miss Browne, whose pleasant refined face I see still, continued her journey to Baden-Baden, and doubtless soon found somebody to adopt.

The reference to Amelia Blanford Edwards requires explanation. Adoption in her case was a matter of affection, by no means of personal interest. Having lost both her parents within a week of each other, she accepted the shelter of a friendly roof, retaining as much of independence as was possible under the circumstances.

From Heidelberg I journeyed to Frankfort, this time taking up my residence with my excellent friend, Fräulein Fink, and devoting myself to the study of German. As I have described this admirable woman and her school elsewhere I will pass over the subject here.

CHAPTER XV

SEMI-BOHEMIAN PARIS

MLLE. EUGÉNIE AND HER THURSDAYS—A WOULD-BE "INGÉNUE" IN WHITE MUSLIN—THE SENTIMENTAL TRIO—PARIS UNDER THE EMPIRE—PARISIAN LIFE À LA BALZAC

DURING the following year I spent some months in what I feel bound to call semi-Bohemian Paris. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, those experiences were not to result in a second Trilby.* I add fortunately, because there is nothing more fatal to a young author than the kind of success by Americans called a "boom."

My abode in Paris was under the roof of a certain Mlle. Eugénie, the surname is not needed, a certificated professor of the French language and literature, with her sister, occupy-

* It would be interesting to know if Du Maurier borrowed that taking name from Charles Nodier's charming "Trilby," a classic three quarters of a century old, and most likely sure of existence when its later namesake is clean forgotten.

ing a flat in the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, at that time, I believe, called, the Chaussée d'Autin. Another young Englishwoman accompanied me. These were their only inmates.

Mlle. Eugénie was a slightly deformed, ill-dressed, ill-kempt little personage, as the French say, "of a certain age"; of a certain age also, although somewhat younger, was her sister Mlle. Josephine, who being well proportioned and not absolutely ugly, seemed to regard herself as a fairy, a veritable syren, by comparison. To fresh-coloured English girls of twenty and odd years she appeared quite elderly, but very possibly she had not passed the Rubicon of forty. Anyhow she was petted by poor little Eugénie as if she belonged to a superior order of beings, and on the great occasion of the week, the Thursday's At Home, would wear white, not, I fear, like Madame Roland to symbolise the immaculate purity of her soul. That school-girlish frock of white muslin, unadorned, except for blue or pink sash, only made her look twice as old and twice as withered; on

others, however, the travesty produced quite a contrary effect, and her entry into the little salon would evoke a perfect buzz of admiration from a circle of admirers.

Nothing is more difficult than to say where semi-Bohemia ends and Bohemia pure and simple begins. There is no doubt whatever that Mlle. Eugénie and her world were what my worthy friend Polly Cornford calls, "a little respectable," and certainly a little respectability is better than none at all.

These wonderful Thursdays were conducted after genteel and absolutely correct fashion. Conversation never went beyond the borders of strict propriety, *i.e.*, propriety according to certain standards. Whist, dominoes, readings, recitals and music, offered a lively and instructive programme. Tea, lemonade, sugared water and biscuits sufficed to stimulate gaiety and that untranslatable mood, called *entrain.* At eleven o'clock the little gathering broke up. But—but—by the light of after experience, also from certain hints dropped by outsiders later, I must believe that Mademoiselle Josephine's

coquetries and the sentimental adulation of her elderly admirers, meant much more than met the eye.

There were three distinguished men of somewhat shabby appearance who invariably joined us on Thursday evenings, whom I will call M. l'Avocat, M. le Poête and M. le Peintre; the first was a tall, attenuated, unprosperous looking, but quite gentlemanly personage of perhaps forty-five. He called himself a barrister and evidently had something to do with the bar, for with great urbanity he met us in the Salle de Pas Perdus, wearing advocate's cap and gown, conducted us over the Palais de Justice, and patiently waited whilst we witnessed a trial. To him, I think, the really clever conversation of Mlle. Eugénie, the atmosphere of sociability, maybe also the game of dominoes with her English pupils, proved no less attractive than the middle-aged nymph in white muslin. Frenchmen, as we all know, cannot exist without a daily interchange of ideas; chat, raillery, discussion, are as necessary to them as oxygen itself. And to poo professional men, a weekly salon, a Thurs-

day, an evening agreeably provided for, is a boon indeed.

M. le Poête was a typical Frenchman outwardly but wanting the usual Gallic light-heartedness. He was a middle-aged man of medium height, rather good-looking than not, and only needed a new frockcoat and red ribbon to look like the most eminent Academician going. His poetry, which he read aloud to us, was really very good, and to this day I reproach myself for never having purchased a copy. His admiration seemed pretty equally divided between the sisters. Whilst Eugénie acted the part of critic, a critic of no mean capacity, Josephine's feminine wiles chased away despondency and doubtless inspired still more impassioned love-strains.

But the Odysseus of this Calypso was M. le Peintre, a rubicund, beaming, loving little man, whom no disappointments could depress and no checks could sour. He had exhibited in the Salon—it must be remembered that the standard of admission was considerably lower than at present—and he now and then got orders for a

portrait or lessons, in fact he just contrived to live. There could be no doubt concerning the sincerity of his devotion to Josephine; equally palpable was the fact that he no more dreamed of matrimony than of reaching the moon on a bicycle. There was something pathetic in this perennial romance, despite its semi-Bohemian atmosphere. One wondered if adhesion to primeval legend, traditionary worship of the prototype Eve could farther go. It was the story of Titania and Bottom reversed. Where other folks saw make-believe youthfulness and artificial graces, a complexion of whitey-brown paper and features sharpened by years, he revelled in visions of angelic loveliness and feminine perfection.

M. le Peintre sometimes came to midday breakfast. It was a sight then to see him watch his enchantress swallow her digestive pill. In those days French folks had a habit, now happily abandoned, of thus inaugurating a repast.

Little lame Eugénie, before serving the soup, would shuffle up to her sister and place the pill-box by her plate; Josephine being a young

frolicsome thing could not, of course, be expected to look after her digestion herself. Then the syren would take out a globule with her long thin fingers, drop it into a spoonful of soup, lackadaisically meet the eyes of her adorer, and, as if thereby strengthened in her resolve, gulp down the pill. Had she swallowed Cleopatra's pearl—or an elephant—he could not have testified more admiration. There was always the same exclamation :—

"It is gone! Mon Dieu, it is really gone!" And always the same ecstatic hand-clapping, Josephine complacently going on with her meal.

When Paris became unbearably hot Josephine went away for a course of sea-bathing or mineral waters. Her health demanded it, Eugénie said, the little lame hardworking professor remaining behind.

On the morrow of her departure M. le Peintre came for news and staid to breakfast. Eugénie, who was the soul of hospitality, brought out a bottle of Bordeaux with which to drink her sister's health. As the forlorn lover held up

his glass and in a voice trembling with emotion got out the words "à la chére absente" (to the dear absent one), a tear was hastily wiped away.

That tear of undoubted genuineness has puzzled me all my life. Was he weeping because he had no means to follow his lode-star? Did he dread lest, like some meteor, she should be swept from his ken for ever, attracted by the force of gravitation into some unreachable sphere? Or being, as he evidently was, a thoroughly kind-hearted, naturally affectionate, honest soul, did he feel regret, shame — but I will not venture upon other hypotheses. Sufficient to say that she went and he staid behind.

Josephine, by the way, was said to be a singing mistress, but we never heard of her pupils, and her vocal performances were exceedingly unprofessional. The Thursdays flagged after this departure, although Eugénie was still at home to her friends.

Here may be mentioned a striking contrast between Paris under the Empire and

Paris of the last twenty-six years. Conversation, at the time of which I write, was restricted, as is still the case in Germany and Russia. No one ventured to discuss politics or criticise the Government. Instead, good talkers argued about books, pictures, and general topics, the long, animated, well expressed sentences proving the best possible French lesson to English listeners.

Here I would observe that an intimate acquaintance with Paris and Parisian life under the Empire, immensely aids us in understanding after-events. Those safety-valves of freedom and stability, a Habeas Corpus Act, liberty of speech and of the press, had been ruthlessly removed by the tinsel Caesar then holding dissolute state at the Tuileries. One of the first measures of the new-made Emperor was the suppression of municipal liberties in the capital.* Every vestige of civic independence and representative administration disappeared under the new régime, the municipal council and central *mairie* or mayoralty

* See "Petite Histoire de Paris." Par F. Bournon. Paris, 1888.

being replaced by two prefectures of the Seine and of police, *the Emperor himself naming* a "commission municipale," composed of thirty-six members.

Is it astonishing that when this state of siege came to abrupt end, popular excesses should be the result? Herein lay the germ of the Commune. At this time Emperor, Empress, and their unfortunate offspring, were living in a fool's paradise. Every morning the little prince on his pony would dash out of the palace gates accompanied by a glittering cavalcade, Spahis and Turcos superbly mounted, their barbaric arms and trappings making a wondrous show. The Imperial family never enjoyed any more popularity than that of their Orleanist predecessor. But a show is ever a show, and in this respect the Parisian remains youthful to the last.* At sight of the pretty

* A public monument ought to be erected to the honour of Mr Frederic Harrison. It is mainly due to his initiative and magnificent protest that the remains of the Prince Imperial, so-called, were not interred in Westminster Abbey, in near proximity to the grave of our great Elizabeth. The late Dean Stanley lost his temper about the matter and referred to the death of

little fellow and his dazzling followers, folks would pause for a moment, raise their hats, wave their handkerchiefs and smile encouragingly. But I dare aver that throughout the length and breadth of France not a tear was shed over his tragic end. The Napoleonic legend had cost French fathers and mothers too dear. Louis Napoleon's police, as we all know, meddled with academic and professional chairs no less than with newspaper offices and printing presses. But Philarète Chasles could lecture delightfully upon English literature at the Collége de France, and our learned little Eugénie escorted us thither and everywhere else in search of improvement. One day she took us to see a friend lodging in a "Pension Bourgeoise," or middle-class boarding house, near the Jardin des Plantes. This was a curious experience. The house stood in a by-street cast into deep shadow by high walls and chestnut trees.

the hapless lad as "a great historic event." In one sense, so it was, but not in the sense the ill-advised Dean intended. Owing to the stir made by Mr Frederic Harrison the matter was brought before Parliament and the proposal vetoed by an immense majority.

At the back stretched a long narrow garden, overgrown with grass, flowers and vegetables. Under the trees were ranged hencoops and garden chairs. We could have fancied ourselves in some sleepy provincial town.

A shabby old man cleaning salad outside the kitchen door proved to be Monsieur le Propriétaire, the stout lady in dressing-gown and curl papers, busied with frying-pans, was Madame. She tidied herself for dinner, and in company of fourteen boarders we sat down to table. Everyone of those boarders, young, old and middle-aged, of both sexes, presented a study of character, the whole thing as like a chapter of *Le Cousin Pons* or *Le Pére Goriot* as it is possible to conceive.

A somewhat similar establishment at Rouen in which I staid with my companion on quitting Paris, was so much Balzac to the life also. And not more changed is Paris of the Third Empire than Rouen of a generation and more ago. Just as I should now search vainly for the straggling old house, the chestnut trees, the vegetable garden and the

chicken coops near the Jardin des Plantes, so do I fruitlessly look for that homely boarding-house, with its straggling orchard and garden, in the very heart of the Norman capital. The comedy of human life goes on still, how has the *mise en scène*, the decoration, changed!

CHAPTER XVI

A GIRL FARMER

"IL FAUT BIEN CHOISIR SES PARENTS"—SUFFOLK WAGS AND WAYS—A HOMERIC PARALLEL—SWEDE TURNIPS AND SWEDENBORG

THE next two or three years were mainly spent in Suffolk, by the death of my father, the management of a small occupation having devolved upon me. Here I would say a word or two concerning the aphorism of a witty French writer quoted above. "Il faut bien choisir ses parents"—we must exercise very great discrimination in the choice of our parents.

Happy the man or woman who with myself can say—here the gods chose for me as I would fain have chosen for myself! Such topics are too sacred for unknown friends

of the circulating library, whilst the most sympathetic reader will be satisfied with a couple of sentences.

Of my mother, the little Barbara Betham, to whom Mary Lamb penned as charming letter as was ever addressed to a child, I shall perhaps say something later. The story of the De Bethams of Betham will aptly illustrate the vicissitudes of an ancient and by no means commonplace family. Concerning my father I will only say that he was generally acknowledged to be the best farmer in that part of the world and that he was a born humorist. If in any of my works I have displayed a particle of the saving grace of humour, that good gift is a paternal inheritance. The younger son of a family, the elder branches of which had been landowners and yeomen for generations, my universally esteemed father did not enjoy those intellectual advantages he so highly prized in others and at immense personal sacrifices placed within reach of his children. One touch of nature makes the whole world kin. Let me add

that his daughter's literary success brightened the close of a laborious and much tried life. The wide world and all its libraries holds no volume so precious to me as the copy of my first romance on which fell paternal tears of pride and joy! At this time we had removed from the fine old manor-house, my childhood's home, into a pretty cottage nearer Ipswich, the small farm alluded to being a mile and quarter off, and the farmhouse being occupied by my "head-man," or foreman, and his wife.

This worthy pair were both excellent farmers, although neither one nor the other could read or write. Had they only possessed a little capital they would have done as well as thrifty peasant owners in France. But the emancipation of the farm labourer was still very far off; the very suggestion of the rural franchise maddened Tory landlords. From the pulpit folks even heard o' Sundays warm apologies of slavery backed up with citations from Scripture. It is not the last hair that breaks the camel's back (again to quote my good friend Polly Cornford)

but the hand that lays it on. That upholding of slavery in Suffolk pulpits during the war of Secession, for once and for all, alienated me from the Church of England. Had dogma and priestly ordinance seemed to me necessities or even luxuries of existence, the Mortara case* —to say nothing of earlier iniquities, the Inquisition, the Massacre of St Bartholomew, the Revocation of the edict of Nantes—would as irrevocably have cut me off from St Peter, Mariolatry, and image worship. Nor did Nonconformist Chapel or Friends' Meeting-House attract. I remained unattached. To return now to practical matters, the affairs of the only condition concerning which we can speak with any certainty. "An der Nächste muss man denken" — we must bend our minds to the thing at hand, wrote Goethe, surely the best maxim for human midgets, creatures of a day! Torquemada and his

* It can hardly be necessary to recapitulate this story of fanaticism and crime, the kidnapping of a Jewish child, its surreptitious baptism into the Romish faith and forcible retention by its kidnappers. See for details of this monstrous act of injustice and inhumanity, Chambers' "Encyclopædia," latest edition.

creatures thought otherwise, with what result history shows.

To return to the girl farmer and her experiences. A near neighbour, by name Mrs Ann Payn, kept me in countenance, whilst the largest farm of an adjoining parish was leased to another widow. But although our names figured on tumbril and waggon we did not go to market. Samples of corn in little brown paper bags—many and many of these have I fashioned with needle and packthread—were showed by relation, neighbour, or head-man. In the same way we purchased pigs and sheep and sold our fat stock. Butter, eggs, and poultry we sold ourselves to market women who called once a week. I well remember a withered little old market woman, Mrs Frost, once saying to me huffishly, "Well miss, since I cannot have the butter, I must *re*cline the eggs." I had wanted my supply of butter for a friend, but these good souls stuck to tradition and their privileges. If you did not give all the produce of your dairy and poultry yard, they declined a portion.

Suffolk wags and ways were often diverting enough.

There was an inquisitive, rather muddle-headed old clergyman in the neighbourhood, who used to hang about farmyards asking absurd questions or questions à propos of nothing.

One day he was watching a stockman feeding my younger brother's pigs.

"What fine pigs, what uncommonly fine pigs, to be sure!" he said, as he looked on admiringly. "How old may these pigs be?" he asked.

"Well, sir," replied the man, who was a bit of a wag, "I should not like to say exactly, but to the best of my knowledge yonder hogs must be just upon fifty year old!"

"Fifty years old? Really, now? Dear me, who would have thought it. Fifty years did you say? On my word, what an age for a pig!"

Country folks, with no pretensions to waggishness or wit, had often a whimsical way of putting things.

I was settling up with the wife of my head man one day, when I noticed an old man sitting in the "baccus."

"So you have a visitor, Mrs Sadler," I said; "some relation, I suppose?"

"Well, yes, miss, to be sure," was the reply, "he is a little related to me"; then she added by way of an expletive, "he's only my father."

The worthy woman had evidently an idea that relationship to be worth mentioning, must go much farther back, like the genealogical tables of Numbers date from Babel or the Flood.

The following anecdote will illustrate the innate self-respect and true gentlemanliness often underlying these uncouth exteriors.

My younger brother noticing one day that the breeching* of a cart-horse attached behind the waggon had slipped, ran after the driver to call his attention to the fact.

"Good God, sir!" exclaimed the poor fellow

* That part of harness round the breech of a horse.—Webster.

beside himself with mortification. "I passed two women just now!"

He was very deaf and imperfectly catching the words, thought that the caution applied to his own nether garments and that a brace button had given way.

The Suffolk ploughman adored his horses, would steal corn for them, if his master allowed stingy measure, would spend hours in brushing and braiding their tails, would talk to each, calling him by name as if to a bosom friend.

It happened that the husband of my old nurse, Betty the poetess, lost his place through the death or removal, I forget which, of his employer. Anyhow there was an auction of furniture, farm implements and live-stock. The plough horses had to go. There was one supreme favourite, between whom and his master existed the warmest affection. That sorrowful morning the man was up betimes, for the last time grooming the sturdy, gentle, intelligent creature. Then with a heavy heart he started. Had any miraculous intervention

happened then, had some angel in human shape suddenly came that way and learning or divining the story pulled out his purse with the words—" Here good man is gold. Yonder beast is your own"—I feel sure that he would never have borne the overjoy. Either his wits or his heart would have given way under such unimaginable good fortune. Nothing of the kind happened, and I have seen moisture in the eyes of rough, prosy farmers as they recounted the sequel. When the sale was over and John had to say good-bye to the loved companion of so many years, he put his arms round the animal's neck and kissed it, big tears rolling down the eyes of both. The horse wept, well understanding that the parting was final.

And in the face of such facts as these we are asked to regard vivisectors as benefactors of humanity!

A near neighbour and fellow farmer would often drop in to supper; ostensibly his visits were for the purpose of affording friendly advice, the discussion of stock and crops, and

so on, in reality, my worthy acquaintance had quite other motives. We have all our shyly avowed aspiration or romance, some spiritual or intellectual secret not to be proclaimed on the housetops.

Good Mr B—— accompanied his wife and children to church on Sundays, and was on the best possible terms with our rector, but the slovenly service, the cut and dry sermon, the terrible discrepancy between preacher and holy office, had rendered him as lukewarm a Churchman as the rest, whilst abouring folk took refuge in their Bethels and meeting-houses. This large, well-to-do farmer did not care to break with orthodoxy, instead he sought spiritual guidance and uplifting in Swedenborg and the New Jerusalem.

An odd volume of this prolific writer had fallen in his way, I believe one of the "Arcana Cœlestia" or Heavenly Mysteries. The work, Moore's "Almanack" and the *Ipswich Journal*, published weekly, made up his literary stock-in-trade. Most ingeniously when calling upon

me he would lead up to his one subject, very often by the mention of Swede turnips. Somehow Swede turnips always seemed a topic of the day.

"Talking of Swede turnips," he said again and again, "reminds me of a question I wanted to ask you. Swedenborg says—" then we were fairly launched on a long Swedenborgian discussion, Mr B—— knowing much more about the subject than myself. But books and bookish people were not plentiful as blackberries in our village. The mere fact of having published a book accorded authority. My neighbour placed explicit confidence on my opinion, he trusted me in the matter of Swedenborg as completely as I did his own judgment in the matter of Swede turnips.

Among the "might have beens" of these early years must be mentioned a poetic career. From my earliest years I had been an indefatigable rhymster, and an exhilarating accident well-nigh turned the scale, poetry instead of romance kicking the beam. An

incident that came under my notice suggested the poem entitled, "The Golden Bee." With the audacity of youth I despatched it to the great Dickens, then editing his *Household Words*. After some time came a cheque for £5 and a number of the magazine containing my contribution.

Five pounds for the artless rhymes of a little country girl — was not this half the price of "Paradise Lost"? But overwhelming as seemed the payment, the approbation of Charles Dickens was guerdon far more prized. And the "Golden Bee" has not falsified the master's judgment. It is now a stock piece at Penny Readings and, like the "White House by the Sea," has long survived a generation!*

The death of my only unmarried sister and partner in the farm severed the last link that bound me to Suffolk. No other spot in England ever possessed or ever will possess such attractions for me, but the climate of my native place was rude, the intellectual resources

* Lately issued with other popular poetic pieces by Dean & Co.

within reach were *nil*, I naturally turned my eyes elsewhere, determined in the words of an excellent but somewhat pedantic old friend, a local stationer, "on permanent residence in the metropolis."

CHAPTER XVII

THE WORLD OF LETTERS, ART, AND SCIENCE

OLD KENSINGTON — REV. W. E. CHANNING — PROFESSOR SYLVESTER—CHARLES BRADLAUGH

WHAT a change from the Suffolk village! Instead of farming folks and farming ways, pastoral scenes and a tide of tranquil monotonous existence, the sudden plunge into the intensest life of London, the life of Letters, Art, and Science! Instead of colloquies upon barley sowing and artificial manuring, wheat threshing and pig feeding, I now enjoyed the historic conversaziones at George Eliot's, the hardly less historic breakfasts of the late Lord Houghton, Madame Bodichon's cosmopolitan gatherings, and how many more rare, delightful and most fruitful experiences! The social and intellectual centres here named have long since been broken up, the leading spirits of each no more dignify, embellish and

inspire the world; most readers will therefore be grateful for reminiscences of a brilliant society, now passed away, of men and women so gifted and so influential in wholly different fields. And here I would add that I propose only to speak of the past in its personal sense, omitting all mention of the living.

My home was made in a part of Kensington now utterly metamorphosed, but at that time wearing a quaint, old-world, suburban aspect. From my uppermost window I looked upon the vast, beautiful old garden of Abingdon House, then the abode of Dhuleep Singh. The stately figure of the Hindoo prince could be seen, as in native dress he sauntered with his attendants under the trees.

Quiet little streets, so-called, are of course ever noisy with street cries, but the neighbourhood of Abingdon House possessed enormous attractions for a country girl. The little Brompton lanes still existed, recalling, however faintly, Suffolk drifts and field paths. Here and there stood lonely old granges or walled-in mansions imparting a picturesque, provincial look. Spring-

tide and early summer brought a glory of leafage and blossom. Those ancient gardens with their venerable apple or pear trees made me think of Ipswich and the fine old Quaker residences familiar to me in childhood.

When not long since revisiting my whilom London quarters I found myself a stranger amid entirely new surroundings. The handsome workhouse stands amid brand-new, fashionable quarters, every vestige of old Kensington has here disappeared.

Perhaps on the other side of the High Street may still stand an old red brick house with an endearing memory. Here on Sunday mornings the Rev. W. E. Channing used to hold a simple but impressive service. I suppose not more than fifty earnest men and women would be gathered in the big old-fashioned drawing-room, attracted thither by the enthusiasm, I am tempted to say inspiration, of the preacher. There was little in those impassioned addresses that could be retained, even by the most retentive memory. We hearkened as to the improvisations of

some great musician, wholly carried away for the moment, lifted out of littleness and earthly dross; no sooner did the voice cease, the accents die on the ear, than the world and our old selves came back again! Only an impression remained. An impression, however, of great preciousness. Mr Channing's theme was ever of universal brotherhood and of the Golden Age to come, the terrestrial anticipation of the heavenly Utopia. As he enlarged upon the theory, his face would wear a look I have never seen but in one other, that of a second, but quite different dreamer, whose portrait will follow later on. This glow, I should rather say, flash, revealing a soul unspeakably ardent in the search after spiritual truth, and a nature of transcendent depth and purity, once seen could never be forgotten. I have never read a line of Mr Channing's writings, nor wish to do. He convinced me, and, doubtless many who heard him, that we may yet encounter angelic spirits, heavenly ministrants in human form, men whose fleshly garment and mortal hap seem acci-

dental, mere extraneous and lamentable circumstance.

Of very different calibre was another acquaintance of this period,* the great mathematician Sylvester.

Rubicund, burly, of commonplace exterior, Professor Sylvester was as full of whimsicalities and contradictions as it is possible for any human being to be. Of his astounding, his unrivalled mathematical capacities and achievements he took small account. To perfect his "upper C," for he greatly prided himself upon his vocal accomplishments, lightly and elegantly to jump over a stile, and to translate an ode of Horace in accordance with his own laws of Syzygy, † these were the ambition of the greatest expert in modern algebra. "Now for my upper C," he would say at the house of his old friend Madam Bodichon, that lady delighting to humour him. So one of the party sat down to the piano

* For I had often met Mr Channing at the great cosmopolitan soirées of Mr and Mrs Peter Taylor. He afterwards called upon me at Hastings.

† Syzygy, meaning, union, from the Greek. See Webster.

and again and again the Professor repeated his upper C.

During the summer we used to meet at Madam Bodichon's country house in Sussex. There happened the stile incident. We were crossing some fields when his hostess, then in brilliant health and spirits, very dexterously took a stile or five-barred gate, I forget which. "Dear me!" said the disconcerted Professor, who had just before managed the business after slowest and clumsiest fashion, "Dear me, you must really teach me, Madam Bodichon, how to get over a stile, you really must!"

And the lesson was good-naturedly given; but the first living mathematician in Europe, who could easily solve algebraical problems, the very contemplation of which would make ordinary brains reel, very nearly dashed out his own in attempting to clear a stile. His two lady companions rushed to the rescue, or without doubt he would have fallen head foremost, doing himself deadly harm.

It was the Professor's habit, no contemptible

one, to carry a little notebook about with him, and therein jot down any remark that appeared suggestive or original. Some of these jottings, pencilled when I was by, are alluded to in his "Laws of Verse."* When translating Horace with Boileau the Professor could say, "Je cherche et je sue" (I seek and I sweat), but he made his friends seek and sweat too.

I can see him now standing on the hearth-rug of my tiny drawing-room, reciting his latest version of the famous ode to Mæcenas. An excellent version it is, but few readers would guess the cost to its author in time and labour. In the original translation his first line had run thus :—

"Tyrrhenian progeny of Kings."

finally altered as follows :—

"Birth of Tyrrhenian regal line!"

In that happy amendment I claim some share. Again and again the Professor recited his ode on the hearth-rug, and again and again we argued about that word "progeny." It

* Longmans, 1870.

sounded in my ears so very unpoetical, so very unmusical. At last he gave way, and certainly "regal line" is a vast improvement. Whimsicalities apart, Sylvester was a great and estimable man, and let us not forget the fact, in one sense, victim of nineteenth century intolerance. He was a Jew, and in spite of his brilliant achievements at Cambridge, could neither hope for the much-coveted Smith's Prize, a Fellowship or Professorship in his University. These good things, forsooth! were reserved for adherents of the Thirty-Nine Articles and members of the Established Church. The greatest mathematical genius of his generation was reduced to the drudgery of teaching and had to content himself with Transatlantic honours. Sylvester, it is said, deeply felt this injustice, as well he might. "Unhappily," he wrote in those early years to a young Nonconformist mathematician of great promise, "there are very few positions in this country offering a suitable nest for the fostering of scientific progress of an abstract kind. All such berths are appropriated by the Universities, which

are positive evils and impediments to all born out of the pale, or at least to all who do not flock within the pale of the Established Church; their existence precludes the State encouragement which would otherwise be bestowed indiscriminately on all."

When aged seventy-two he was indeed named Savilian professor to the University of Oxford and Fellow of New College.

Another striking figure of this period, and with Professor Sylvester also a victim of nineteenth century intolerance, was Charles Bradlaugh.

What an irony runs through the career of that epoch-making man! So much we may surely say of one who, single-handed against society, the Church and the law, obtained for English law-makers liberty of conscience! The immense moral victory was perhaps Bradlaugh's most coveted reward; such a character could not set great store by popularity or worldly fortune. And perhaps he inwardly chuckled at a reaction, surely the strangest witnessed in our own or any time! but yesterday a scape-goat, a bugbear, a reprobate, on the morrow

not only a man and a brother, but a positive exemplar and shining light. How deepseated was universal prejudice against Bradlaugh, the following story will show. The very last people in the world to be repelled by anyone's religious or anti-religious opinions were surely George Eliot and George Henry Lewes! Yet I well remember that when describing an evening at the Hall of Science, the latter observed laughingly,

"I verily believe, Polly," thus he usually called his companion, "that our friend has a sneaking fondness for Mr Bradlaugh!"

The speech, goodnaturedness itself, evidently implied tacit cause for astonishment, the notion that such sympathy was hardly credible, hardly admissible, in a well regulated mind.

Truth to tell, despite my respect for non-conformity in any shape,* the first impression of Charles Bradlaugh was anything but favour-able. No one can entertain profounder rever-

* "In this age, the mere example of nonconformity, the mere refusal to bend the knee to custom, is itself a service." J. S. Mill, *On Liberty*. I have ever been of this opinion.

ence for the founder of Christianity than myself, and on the occasion in question, a discussion took place between Mr Bradlaugh and a dissenting minister upon the origin and author of the Christian religion. The two disputants were unequally matched, the sceptic being in the prime of bodily and mental faculties, whilst the believer was an old white-haired man, full of conviction and having the Scriptures at his fingers' end, no doubt, but unable to combat the other's bitter sarcasms and unanswerable logic. At last a painful scene occurred. The worsted adversary put his hand to his head and staggered as one suddenly stricken with paralysis.

"I—I—cannot answer you," he stammered, evidently abashed, horrorstricken at finding himself so poor an upholder of the faith that was in him.

At that time Bradlaugh's hand seemed against every man and every man's hand against Bradlaugh, a position in itself calling for pity if not for commendation. It was the hero of later days one felt glad to have seen, the pale,

buffeted, hustled, but unconquerable figure, ex-errand boy, trooper, coal retailer, and lawyer's clerk arraigning that awful body, the House of Commons, arraigning traditional England, in his own person embodiment of all that has made England's greatness, the passion for spiritual as well as political freedom!

CHAPTER XVIII

MORE LONDON SOUVENIRS

DR KARL MARX AND THE INTERNATIONAL—JOHN STUART MILL — LOUIS BLANC — "THE CAMELS" — FLOWERS IN FINSBURY—A WITTICISM.

AT the time I write of (1867-70-1) the International Working Man's Association held its sittings in High Holborn under the presidency of Dr Karl Marx. As the author of "Das Kapitel" may now be pronounced a historic personage, these recollections do not call for apology.

Strange it was to quit the world of fashion and pleasure for the purlieus of penury, toil, and clubs of political exiles!

At eight o'clock on a summer evening the Kensington High Street showed one unbroken stream and counter-stream of glittering equipages and gay toilettes, all West-End London

bound being to theatres, dinners, and entertainments manifold.

As one journeyed eastward it was not so. Lurid November were more in harmony with the surroundings here! instead of growing more animated the great high road of Holborn main artery of industrial London became quieter and less peopled.

We stopped at a small shop, of which shutters, front and side door were all shut, the latter being opened by a young foreign mechanic in working dress. The council assembled immediately the workshop closed, so that members had no time to change their clothes. Following our conductor we climbed a dark, narrow staircase, and were ushered into a small, dingy, but well lighted room, the council chamber of redoubtable International Working Man's Association.* Round the table sat perhaps a score of working-men, most of them foreigners, German, French,

* The public was not admitted to these sittings. My companion of the other sex was a member and prominent supporter of the movement.

Spanish, Italian, with two or three Englishmen. Intellectually the types were good, and much as one might differ from the rest, all showed the same quiet determination and fixity of purpose. The average physique was poor. All looked more or less worn out with the day's labour, whilst some were terribly attenuated and sallow.

My attention was naturally concentrated on the figure of the President, a figure no more attractive than that of Charles Bradlaugh, but fully as rememberable. The portly, commanding frame, the powerful head with its shock of raven black hair, the imperturbable features, and slow, measured speech, once seen and heard could never be forgotten. Yet, in spite of the colossal intellect and iron purpose here embodied, neither in Karl Marx's physiognomy nor in Charles Bradlaugh's did I read a certain inexorableness characteristic of a quite different personage to be portrayed later. I should say that the predominating mental trait of the German social reformer was that Teutonic, speculative dreaminess so often allied

in Germany with reasoning power of the highest order.

The proceedings were not at all lively. One by one several members stood up, and after reading a report laid propositions before the council. Occasionally the street bell tinkled, when the secretary would go down and admit a tardy member. Citizen after citizen—thus each speaker was called—said what he had to say, then reseated himself. Soon after ten o'clock the meeting broke up, the gloomy little council chamber was left to darkness and solitude.

The International Working Man's Association may not have set to work in the right spirit, its theories of social reorganization may be radically wrong. Yet let us ungrudgingly grant so much. When later, France was being egged on to war, devastation and the verge of bankruptcy and dismemberment, the International, and the International alone, protested against such delirium. "Are we mad," said its members, "that this pseudo-Napoleon, this charlatan and enemy of free thought and

free speech, should do with millions as he will, for the sake of a hateful and fatal dynasty? In God's name, let us bestir ourselves whilst it is yet time, and avoid the calamity." None took heed, and the end was what? France forfeited her historic frontiers, was orphaned of her best and bravest, for a time lost rank among nations because she had once more entrusted her fortunes to a make-believe Bonaparte!*

The Woman's Suffrage question, with many another of abstract justice, is utterly wanting in attractiveness, at least to myself. We listen to speakers on the subject resignedly as to a report of the Society for the Protection of Children or the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. I have, moreover, from the very beginning of my literary career wholly abstained from taking any part whatever in social, philanthropic or political agitations. "An der Nächste muss

* I afterwards, with the kind help of a former secretary, contributed a history of the International Working Man's Association to *Fraser's Magazine* (1875). This history was translated into Italian and published in the *Diritto*.

man denken," wrote the "wise-browed Goethe," a motto I have persistently adopted. We must bend our minds to the matter in hand, and a conscientious writer, whether novelist or otherwise, has enough to do to attend to subject-matter and sentences. I am fond of quoting Mr John Morley. His apothegms remain in the memory whether you will or no. And none are truer than one of which I here give the substance rather than the exact words, for I quote from memory:—"No easy matter is it to manipulate that mighty engine, the English language." This has ever been my own opinion. Instead, therefore, of stumping the country on behalf of the divided skirt, and other praiseworthy objects, I have stuck to the immediate business of an author, namely, literary workmanship, the art of writing, the doing one's best possible with native gifts.

But a meeting at which John Stuart Mill was to speak would surely magnetize anyone and under any conceivable circumstances. This especial gathering, moreover, was I believe the first great public meeting got up by advocates

of female suffrage, and as such has historic interest.

What was said for the most part escapes my memory; unforgetable on the contrary, remains the impression of John Stuart Mill as a personality. His countenance in its look of final conviction, of a thinker whose mind upon weighty subjects was irrevocably made up, from whose ethic verdicts there was no appeal, had something awful, even sublime, in its rigidity and marble-like implacableness. You felt as you gazed that chance and destiny, inclination and human weakness exercised no sway whatever over this man, that here were the immovable purpose, iron will and unflinching self-oblivion of which, for good or for evil, the world's umpires and leaders are made. Had Stuart Mill lived in mediaeval or revolutionary times, who can say? Born in Spain he might have discerned duty with the eyes of a Loyola, in France a century ago with those of a Terrorist. By way of relief to his sober, almost solemn utterances, came the wit and raillery of the late Lord Houghton.

"Was ever such inconsistency?" he said. "The French Revolution did not recognise the political rights of women but made no scruple whatever about cutting off their heads as political offenders!"

The history of the French Revolution was not as familiar to me then as now, or I might have observed afterwards that whilst the great Danton satirized women-statesmen in the person of his political rival and bitter enemy Madame Roland, long before, Marat had written upon the intellectual and political equality of the sexes. Marat's odious reputation* must not blind us to the fact that he was no horseleech living over a stable, as Carlyle would have us believe, but, on the contrary, a highly-accomplished physician, who had amassed a competency by the exercise of his profession.

The French Revolution recalls another interesting and unique figure belonging to

* See the *Pall Mall Magazine* for Sep.-Oct. 1896. "Marat," by Professor Morse Stephen. Marat, like most of the Terrorists, was possibly much less black than he was painted.

this period. Louis Blanc I met both in London and at Brighton, and charmingly he talked, his shabby dressing-gown folded over his knees, his tiny form enlarged and ennobled by a head of magnificent proportions and startlingly brilliant black eyes.

He spoke English with Academic fastidiousness and loved to recount an early experience of exile in England. Louis Blanc, be it remembered, was a victim of Napoleonic conscription.

In attempting to climb a London omnibus he once missed his footing and in saving himself presented, I daresay, a whimsical figure enough. Some outside passengers laughed aloud, whereupon Louis Blanc turned upon them severely—

"Is it the custom in England, gentlemen, for folks to laugh when a man breaks his leg?"

The rebuke was well received, the merrymakers apologised and vied with each other in offering their aid and other acts of politeness. He used this anecdote as an illustration of the kindliness underlying the rough exterior of an average John Bull.

The popularity of Louis Blanc in Paris was enormous. When in 1878, having returned from exile, he gave a lecture on Rousseau at the Cirque D'Hiver, the stream of people, forming what in France is called "une queue," was a quarter of a mile long. I turned away hopelessly. As well try to get into the Grand Opera on a free day! All the workaday world of Paris had turned out to hear the author of "L'organization de Travail" and projector of national workshops. About his history of the French Revolution M. Cherbuliez has just told us a pleasant story.* Asked what had first suggested the writing of such a work he replied — "'Les considérations sur la Revolution' de Mme. de Staël!" What an argument in favour of the extension of University degrees to women and women's rights generally!

Many other engaging recollections crowd on my mind. I well remembered one Sunday afternoon's walk with friends to "The Camels," at Fulham, the home of Joseph Bonomi, the

* *La Revue des deux Mondes*, April 1, 1897.

famous Egyptologist. We started early, taking one little lane after another, on either side having privet hedges in bloom, market gardens, or isolated manor-houses. It was next best to a walk amid native meadows and cornfields. "The Camels" was no piece of antiquity, instead a new, well built, imposing villa, built by its owner for family use, and having an emblematic bas-relief on the façade, a group of camels, life-size and carved in red stone. Jenny Lind, then Mme. Goldsmid, lived next door. At the back of the house stretched a large garden, and here Mr and Mrs Bonomi received their friends, an unintermittent stream, not of mere callers but persons on a footing of real intimacy, who poured in, some to sit down to the enormous and substantially spread tea-table, others to join the equally solid supper later on.

There was something particularly cordial and unpretending about this hospitality. It was no matter of a cup of coffee and mere "So glad to have seen you," or conventional chat; instead intercourse in the proper sense of the word,

an assemblage of sympathetic friends and acquaintances with ample time and opportunity for discussion. All too was so easy and homelike, with abundance of culture and learning, but not a vestige of parade artificiality.

Some mortals seem to enjoy two lives, their span of existence being doubled. Thus it was with Joseph Bonomi, a man whose achievements already belonged to the historian and the encyclopædia, yet in quite another sense living over again, beginning the pleasant life of home and family ties. At this time "The Camels" resounded with the voices of happy children, a large young family of our host swelling the numbers at tea.

Another recollection of unconventional kind carries me into quite another scene. It has always seemed to me that the choicest pleasures of London lie outside the daily routine, the calendar of fashion and guide books.

On Saturday afternoons of early summer how good and fruitful were the botanical lectures delivered in the rotunda of the London Institution, Finsbury Square! The gathering of

students, old and young, all attracted thither by love of science, all belonging to the middle or humbler classes, afforded in itself a charming study. Everyone was so attentive, so anxious not to miss a single word! The vast heap of wild flowers lying on the lecturer's table doubtless to many recalled childish rambles in country lanes, whilst to other minds the piled-up blossoms would bring visions of rustic joy perhaps as yet untasted. Here were "Lady Smocks all silver white," Marsh Marigolds recalling Rossetti's fine verse,* Shepherd's Purse, most modest of wayside graces, cowslips, gorse and branches of pink and white may, with others in abundance. The demonstration over, students were permitted to carry away these treasures, the condition being that they were students indeed.

Strange it was that a country girl should first have been attracted to the study of botany in the heart of London! Thus, however, it came about, and after a long lapse of years I recall the Rotunda of the London Institution with positive affection. Later on, I attended

* "The flooded marshland flaunts its marigold."

some equally attractive botanical lectures by Professor Thiselton Dyer at the South Kensington Museum; also the private course of an accomplished lady professor, Mrs Whelpdale. The study of flowers, plants and the entire vegetable world, has ever seemed to me the most fascinating in the world.

A smattering of scientific knowledge, often so much more useful than painfully acquired accomplishments, is ever attainable in London, we may now add, everywhere. This reminds me of a witticism too good for the world willingly to let die. In company of Hampstead friends I had attended a lecture by the late Professor Lancaster on the human body, its constituent parts and formation. As we emerged from the lecture hall a lady acquaintance, who had evidently been intensely bored by the proceedings, said to her husband—"After all, what *is* the use of knowing about the human body."

"Well, my love," good naturedly replied her partner, "there is no premium put upon ignorance that I know of."

CHAPTER XIX

GEORGE ELIOT AND MADAME BODICHON

"The Overture to 'Fidelio,' my dear!"—"Marian" and "Barbara"—Rembrandt and Bordone—The parting of the Ways—"Oh, Barbara, Barbara, what have you done?"—A dinner party

I first saw George Eliot in the early summer of 1868. During the preceding winter I had made with her intimate friend and my own, Madame Bodichon, a deeply interesting tour through Spain, followed by a somewhat venturesome and perilous journey to Algiers by way of Oran. At that time drivers of the diligence carried firearms, and every inch of the road was beset by dangers of one kind or another, Arab cut-throats and plunderers who if caught were summarily shot down, malaria, and, last but not least, earthquake. The final stages of this memorable expedition took us through a region desolated by shock after

shock, towns and villages abandoned and in ruins, and the entire population camped out.

Madame Bodichon, who at that time always wintered at Algiers, did not return to London till May. One of her very first visits was naturally paid to the Priory.

Of this eminent, I am tempted to say illustrious, woman, née Barbara Leigh Smith, I shall speak at greater length hereafter. I will only mention now that Madame Bodichon's library contained a copy of "Adam Bede," in which the author had written a short time after its appearance:—"*To her who first recognised me in this work.*" The pair called each other "Barbara" and "Marian" and were sisters as far as exceptional natures like that of George Eliot, can be said to have any relations. Despite George Henry Lewes' loverlike petting, despite her numerous adorers, intellectually speaking, of the same sex, despite the affection of such a woman as Barbara Bodichon and the little court of devoted admirers admitted to her intimacy, she ever

seemed to me alone, sadly, almost sublimely alone.

The popularity of George Eliot's works may fluctuate from time to time, their sadness and in some their learnedness may alienate many readers. Her life-story will always prove a stumbling block to the puritanical. But the fact of intellectual supremacy remains. "Middlemarch" is an unanswerable argument against the assertors of unisexual intellectuality. Many stories exhilarate more. For my own part I would not give that immortal chapter in which Jane Eyre puts on a clean muslin dress and prepares to meet her lover for the whole of George Eliot's great prose epic. Such opinions, of course, do not in the least affect the merits of the case. I should like to set, say, ten or a score of ordinary upholders of male superiority, the following task:—Given a single reading and a certain time (the book of course being withheld, as grammars and hand-books from students under examination), write down an exact detailed and concise account of the plot and interweaving of counter-plot in "Middlemarch."

Many windbags fresh from Oxford or Cambridge, whippersnappers who having "gone up" and "gone down" a certain number of times, feel in consequence able lordlily to criticise everything under the sun, would scratch their empty heads over the job and confess themselves, in slang speech, hopelessly "floored." Perhaps "Middlemarch" would be none the less interesting for a simpler plot. As it stands, the work is stupendous, Shakespearian, a canvas to be set beside the half-dozen great imaginative creations of the world, whether in poetry or prose.

The first thing Madame Bodichon did on her return from Algiers was to call at the Priory, taking me with her. Being a privileged person she used to call there at very unconventional hours, upon this occasion immediately after dinner.

"You stay outside," she said, "and if I obtain permission to introduce you I will call out."

So I waited in the road just behind the cloister-like gate, but only for a minute or two.

"You may come in," shouted Madame Bodichon from the hall door. Accordingly, in I went, receiving cordial welcome.

George Eliot was at this time about fifty, but looked years older. She wore, as she always did, a plain black silk dress, to-night having a white shawl about her shoulders and light gloves in her hand, being indeed dressed for the opera. Some people have talked and written of the ugliness of this great woman; this sort of criticism recalls a famous scene in "Middlemarch." "Mr Casaubon has a wart on his nose," said pert little Celia to her sister. "I dare say he has," was Dorothea's dignified rebuke, "when certain people look at him." And thus George Eliot in some eyes was ugly because, forsooth, she lacked dimpled cheeks, round eyes, and pretty mouth! If hers was ugliness, would we had more of it in the world! When in speaking, her large, usually solemn features lighted up, a positive light would flash from them, a luminosity irradiate, not her own person only, but her surroundings. A sovereign nature, an

august intellect, had transported us into its own atmosphere.

"I am very glad to see you, associated as you are so pleasantly with Barbara's letters from Spain," she said, then her friend took possession of her and George Henry Lewes chatted with me on Spanish Literature and the last new Spanish novel or play. This wonderful and most genial little man seemed to know everything, to be an encyclopædia before, and not behind, his time like Charles Lamb. As we talked the sound of carriage wheels was heard outside. Lewes started up.

"The overture to 'Fidelio,' my dear, we shall miss the overture! Our friends must excuse us," he cried.

They had seats at the opera, so we accompanied them to the door and saw them drive off. Lewes, delighted as a schoolboy bound to the pantomime, George Eliot smiling gravely, "Fare thee well, dear," she said, waving her hand to Madame Bodichon, whom the minute before she had tenderly kissed.

A greater contrast than that presented by

the friends could hardly be imagined; the author of "Middlemarch,' with her large sallow features lighted up by intermittent flashes of thought or feeling, her angular, somewhat stooping figure, stifly habited in black, the whole forming a sombre Rembrandt-like picture; the foundress of Girton College, whose portrait, some one has said, is in every picture-gallery of Europe, her magnificent complexion, golden hair and lovely expression, recalling the Bordone of the Louvre and the Titian of our own National Gallery. Madame Bodichon's blue eyes beamed with "the wild joy of living," * and her great animal spirits were generally infectious. George Elliot, her "Marian," whilst evidently revelling in such a personality, never quite caught the glow, never like Lewes, became playsome and effervescent. But the pair were friends of long-standing, no social complications, no verdicts of the world clouding their intimacy. Madame Bodichon was far too large-souled and large-hearted to sit in

* R. B. Browning. "Ride in the Metidja."

judgment upon a fellow-being whose defiance of precedents concerned herself only. The following story throws light on the early relations of these two women, each so exceptionally gifted, each so influential in a wholly different sphere. The acquaintance of Mary Ann Evans and Barbara Leigh Smith had ripened into friendship long before the first was known to fame, and before she had taken the perilous leap, in other words, had challenged society by a precedent. On the brink of that decision, when love and womanly pride were battling for mastery, when the great novelist to be, trembled before the only shadow clouding a radiant future, the lovers and Barbara Leigh Smith spent a day together in the country. As she stood thus at the parting of the ways, Mary Ann Evans unbosomed herself to her friend, even asked counsel. Should she take the perilous leap or not, forego this dream of passionate love, take refuge in the consolations of renouncement and ordinary self-praise?

"What earthly right had I to advise her in

such a case?" Madame Bodichon said, when years after recounting the story. "I replied that her own heart must decide, and that no matter what her decision or its consequences should be, I would stand by her so long as I lived."

There can now be no reason for withholding an incident which indeed I was never bidden to keep secret.

We all know the share that George Henry Lewes had in George Eliot's literary career. What if at this juncture his influence had been wholly withdrawn? In all probability the world would have lost "Daniel Deronda" and "Romola," and perhaps gained a second "Adam Bede" or "Mill on the Floss." Or perhaps we should have had no novelist at all, instead a great woman-philosopher, Kant or Spencer of the other sex. That mighty intellect and commanding spirit would have silenced boyish supporters of male supremacy anyhow. Maybe the conviction that Madame Bodichon had proved the silent, the unconscious umpire of their destinies, rendered her so dear to George Eliot and George Henry Lewes. Their

affection and joy in that bright, exhilarating presence was delightful to witness. Madame Bodichon's attitude in this matter affords the key to her character. For her the individual was everything, conventionalities, public suffrages, the homage of the world, of no account. It was respect for humanity in the concrete that made her life so salutary and stimulating.

At this time she spent some months every year at her London house, 5 Blandford Square, and was privileged to call at the Priory whenever she pleased, indeed to invite herself to the two o'clock luncheon. Upon one occasion she rang the bell twenty minutes or a quarter of an hour too soon, whereupon out rushed her hostess, pale, trembling, dishevelled, a veritable Sibyl, disturbed in the fine frenzy of inspiration!

"Oh, Barbara, Barbara!" she cried, extremely agitated, "what have you done?"

The ever welcome guest had disturbed her friend in a scene of "Romola!"

"I felt ready to cry like a naughty child,"

added the narrator, "but from the opposite door out rushed Mr Lewes, who, in the kindest manner, soothed us both and put everything right."

The metaphysician worked as hard as the novelist, but despite his metempirics, a philosophical term of his own invention, in spite of poor health, Lewes remained frolicsome to the last.

One evening as they were expected to dinner, no one being there but the hostess and myself, the drawing-room door was flung wide with the announcement—"Captain and Mrs Harrison."

"Good Heavens," whispered Madam Bodichon aghast, "some self-invited relations from the Antipodes, and George Eliot and George Lewes coming!"

A well-known laugh in the doorway reassured her. It was one of Lewes' little jokes.

The dinner prefaced so playfully was rather a solemn affair. Instead of light, digestive chat anent books, the drama or literary matters in general, one of the three, for I played the

part of listener, mooted no less of a topic than the destruction of the globe, the when and how, our familiar world would come to an end.

I think I hear George Eliot's many-toned fervid voice as she put forward one hypothesis after another.

"And yet, dear Barbara, it might happen thus," and so on.

I believe when we rose from the table the casting vote had been in favour of combustion by the tail of a comet. Somehow even Madame Bodichon's usually high spirits flagged, and no wonder. There are moments when all of us need a little relaxation, a hum-drum human laugh. This wonderful pair seldom enjoyed either. They longed to ride a hobby-horse but found the pastime, I should say, accomplishment, unattainable.

I well remember a lament of George Henry Lewes on this subject.

"A bramble bush reminds me of a friend more fortunate than myself," he said. "This learned fellow had a hobby, and his was

brambles. One day he came to me with a radiant face. 'I have at last found my bramble,' he cried, alluding to an especial kind that had hitherto alluded his search. How I envied that man!"

In all probability a hobby-horse would have prolonged the lives of both metaphysician and novelist. Their intellects had no repose. With Madame Bodichon, who was also consumed by abnormal mental activity of quite different kind, they were worn out at a period when many men and women may be considered still in their prime.

CHAPTER XX

GEORGE ELIOT AND MADAME BODICHON—*continued*

SUNDAY AFTERNOONS AT THE PRIORY—GRACE AND AMELIA—BROWNING—"SINGING BIRDS"—TURGENEFF—WILLIAM ALLINGHAM—THE ISLE OF WIGHT—BEETHOVEN—TALKS OF "POLLY"—SHANKLIN—"A SERIOUS TEA"—A CHRISTMAS DINNER—"I ALWAYS DO THAT SORT OF THING"

AFTER this introduction I occasionally attended the historic Sunday afternoons at the Priory; at one time, when George Henry Lewes made tea, as he styled it, "the whole duty of man," these were small gatherings of pre-eminent intellects, as years wore on, large reunions, with quite a conventional, one might say a fashionable, even frivolous element. Handsome equipages, powdered footmen and elegantly-dressed ladies now animated those sober precincts, greatly to the delight of Grace and Amelia. The middle-aged domestics, sisters, I believe, and long in the service of their

employers, now became wildly ambitious. They hoped and firmly believed that some fine day the Queen herself would call upon their mistress, but the hope and the dream were never realised. And who can tell? Perhaps such disappointment and bitter illusion had something to do with what afterwards happened; Grace and Amelia became captious, moody, tyrannical, finally took their departure.

A young author's preconceptions of great men or women are apt to prove illusory also. Browning had ever seemed to me a poet immensely inferior to his glorious wife.* I was nevertheless hardly prepared for the personality here before my eyes. It was difficult to believe that the hero of the "Sonnets from the Portuguese" and the elderly flirt and chatterer of nonsense, could be one and the same person. I have certainly heard Browning

* A year ago I visited the Poet's Corner with a Frenchwoman. What was her astonishment and profound disgust to find no monuments here of the immortal trio, E. B. Browning, Currer Bell and George Eliot, the only monument erected to a woman being that of a foreign opera singer! Her feelings I fully shared.

tell a good story (from a newspaper) at Lord Houghton's famous breakfast table. As a rule he was magnetised by pretty dresses, high sounding titles and flippant feminine tongues; by George Henry Lewes' "singing birds," Lady Flora this, Lady Emilia that, who could sit down to the piano and warble in drawing-room fashion some new French song.

For it had come to this; instead of the grave discussions or brilliant talk of former days, instead of listening to George Eliot's suggestive utterances and most musical, many-toned voice, folks were silenced by the rattle of a pianoforte accompaniment and the trills of a lady amateur!

A knot of thinkers,* foremost men of our day, still frequented this now eagerly sought salon, and few illustrious foreigners but succeeded in obtaining an introduction. One afternoon Turgeneff's colossal figure appeared, by his side the equally colossal figure of that

* I forbear throughout these pages to make any illusion whatever to celebrated personages still living.

first-rate Russian scholar and estimable man, the late W. S. Ralston. What chiefly struck me about Turgeneff, for I had no conversation with him, was his unpretendingness and air of vague, quiet, dreamy sadness. The man resembled his books. Great Turgeneff undoubtedly is, but one and all of his stories are characterised by the same vague, undefinable sadness, the monotone of the steppes. We are impressed as we read; the impression fades. We re-read, again to find that alike plot, situation and characters elude mental grip. It would be interesting to learn whether his own countrymen pronounce the same literary judgment.

An ever welcome and gracious personality was the Irsh poet William Allingham. With neither epic nor tragedy has the author of "Laurence Blomfield in Ireland," enriched the world. But he has accomplished what should satisfy the sincerest and the most ambitious; several of his songs and poems have long since become common property, being included in every anthology and poetry book for

schools. Lives the child who has not by heart,—

"Red Cap, Blue Jacket and White Owl's Feather?"

"William Allingham is no echo," said George Eliot of him; he was more than a pleasant, easy talker, as she called another acquaintance. The Irish poet, a close friend of Madame Bodichon's also, had flashes of wit and gaiety, the charm of perpetual youth, but was yet capable of deep seriousness. And in the very best sense of the word he was no respecter of persons, with George Eliot being as natural, as entirely and transparently himself, as with any other friend or comrade.

In the early winter of that terrible year 1870, Madame Bodichon took a furnished house near Ryde and invited me to join her. George Eliot and George Henry Lewes coming for Christmas, as the former wrote to her friend, "to weep together over the sorrows of France."

In some respects the pleasant plan failed. Not for years had weather so severe visited

the traditionally mild little island. Instead of finding roses and violets in Ventnor gardens, sunshine and balminess everywhere, skating, snow and a bitter north wind were the order of the day. Our abode, too, a recently built commodious High Church rectory, in spite of tremendous fires in every room and passage, could not be made snug and warm as a second "Priory." Poor Lewes sometimes looked blue with cold and although the pair delighted in the society of their friend, and in the absolute quiet and such glimpses of natural scenery as could be obtained, the arctic visitation and awful calamities of France, kept down high spirits.

I well remember their arrival. As the hostess entered the drawing-room with her friends, George Eliot bent almost ecstatically over an exquisite flower on the centre table, what flower it was I have forgotten. The lovely bloom, the delicious fragrance brought out that radiance in her face I have before alluded to, a luminosity, no other word seems applicable, as transforming as it was evan-

escent.* "Why, oh, why," she cried in her peculiar sighing voice, a voice that was often indeed a sigh, "not pray to such lovely things as these?" and she hung over the flower in an attitude of positive adoration. It was this intensity, alike of feeling, conviction and aspiration that characterised her as I suppose it characterises most sovereign natures.

The pair had brought a little work with them and the Vicar's handsome study was assigned to Lewes as a study. But on the second morning he joined George Eliot in hers, a smaller, less cheerless breakfast room. The work, I think, consisted only of proof correcting, whilst for holiday reading, they had brought surely the strangest book in the world, namely, Wolff's "Prolegomena." The volume possessed certainly one attraction. It did not at all bear on the painful events of the day. After dinner George Henry Lewes would tell us the most wonderful stories or his companion would sit down to the piano.

* Perhaps the kind of light described by the Italian poet, "the lighting of the angelic smile."

"What shall it be, dear little boy?" she would ask as she turned over the contents of the music waggon, and the dear little boy—I loved to hear these terms of endearment among the great—generally demanded Beethoven. One Sonata she played to us was Op. 14, No. 2, containing the slow, plaintive Andante in A Minor, ever one of my favourites.

She played correctly, conscientiously, but not with the *entrain* and charm of far inferior musicians. It is not geniuses, it is the merely talented people who can be universally brilliant, shine in everything, dazzle by parade of mere accomplishments. And listening to George Eliot's pianoforte playing one could but feel here as ever the deep-seated melancholy that had not, as some suppose, her own life for its cause but the life of all humanity. On her shoulders seemed to rest the material and spiritual burdens of the universe.

The stay lasted a week, during which I saw much more of the metaphysician than of the novelist, although of course we all met at meals and spent the evening together. Madame

Bodichon, ever enthusiastic to the verge of infatuation, was naturally athirst for the society of her adored Marian. Maugre their devotion to each other, such opportunities of intercourse were rare. The foundress of Girton, the prime mover in bringing about the Married Women's Property Bill, the charming water-colour amateur, lived from the first of January to the thirty-first of December in a perpetual whirl of business, study and pleasure. No wonder that such feverish energy, mental activities so manysided, and an existence absolutely devoid of repose, rendered her, alas! an aged, broken-down woman at fifty!

Madame Bodichon would therefore carry off George Eliot in one direction, Lewes and I taking a long brisk walk in another.

He loved a country ramble even in winter and generally talked the whole time of "Polly." It delighted him to discover in me a whole-hearted admirer of "Felix Holt," a work less generally admired than their great brethren, but to my thinking as fine in its way as "Middle-march."

How Lewes laughed when I quoted that denunciation of his own sex by Mrs Transom's maid, "the creatures who stand straddling and gossiping in the rain!"

George Eliot never talked of her own books; had she done so, I was at that time too bashful to ask her the following question:—"Is it your experience, is it your conviction, that throughout life the lower nature subdues, leads in chains, the higher? Your Romola, meek slave of the despicable Tito, your Maggie Tulliver, ever swayed by that incarnation of masculine selfishness, her brother Tom, your Lydgate fawning as a beaten hound on the heartless, brainless, essentially vulgar Rosamund, and the rest, for the parallel holds good throughout all your works,—can it be that such is your summing-up of human lot and character?" If so, no wonder that alike the author and her books were steeped in sadness, not the hard, revolting pessimism of an Ibsen, a Flaubert, rather the tearful, pious sympathy of a Saint Francis d'Assisi or a Santa Theresa.

One afternoon we all visited Shanklin, an excursion I never recall without a twinge of conscience. After enjoying the magnificent Chine together we separated, George Eliot and her companion continuing their stroll, my hostess and self calling upon a lady novelist, author of some pretty stories published under a pseudonym, then living in the village. We had arranged to meet at the station, and thither, after half an hour's chat, the authoress in question accompanied us. We sat down on the platform, catching a glimpse of our illustrious Incognitos at the farther end. How I longed to whisper in my fellow novelist's ear "yonder stooping veiled figure in black is the author of 'Adam Bede.'" It seems positively unchristianlike to withhold a piece of information so full of surprise, so thrilling. But the condition of silence had been imposed. Regretfully, self reproachfully, morosely, I held my peace. That lady is ignorant to this day of the tantalising "might have been."

Tell George Henry Lewes a good story and he became your fast friend for life.

At this time another authoress lived in the Isle of Wight, a lady whose clerical stories for girls have enjoyed and perhaps still enjoy enormous popularity. She kept a celebrated school for young ladies near Ventnor, and through common friends expressed a wish to make my acquaintance. As, however, it was the period of examinations, she wrote saying that she much regretted that "she could only do herself the pleasure of inviting Miss B—— E—— to a serious tea!"

"I thank thee, friend, for that story," Lewes exclaimed, laughing heartily, and he was greatly interested in the tea itself, which did prove somewhat serious.

We always all breakfasted together, and on Christmas morning there was the usual round of good wishes. "A merry Christmas to you, Ann, and a marrying New Year," was Lewes' greeting to his hostess's staid middle-aged parlour-maid. In spite of dyspepsia and other drawbacks to existence he remained captivatingly genial and pranksome. When we sat

down to our Christmas dinner, and Ann with extraordinary flourish deposited a huge covered dish on the table, he rubbed his hands, smiling at the mistress of the house.

"You will, I am sure, Barbara," he said, "excuse the liberty taken by an old friend. I have ventured to add a little delicacy to your bill of fare. Ann, remove the cover!"

We all started back with a scream. Something like a snake lay there, rebounding as it uncoiled. It was indeed the vicar's scourge which Lewes had unhooked from its nail in the study, and which, doubtless, often served the purpose of self flagellation. We were occupying the house of a so-called High Church clergyman, one of those gentry who delight in confessing foolish girls, who love Rome much, but adore the emoluments of the Church of England even more!

George Eliot would not have relished the notion of "a chiel among them takin' notes," nor can my late friend Professor Sylvester's

habit of the perpetual note-book be commended. Still I regret now that I did not journalise that historic week at Swanmore Parsonage. One well-remembered conversation arouses reflection.

The topic was literary excellence and literary fame, or perhaps, I should rather say, recognition, and the criterium of both.

"There is the money test," George Eliot said, and paused, as she often did before continuing a train of thought. Would she have uttered that sentence now, could the money test be accepted as a criterium when she spoke? I played the part of listener, but have often dwelt on the words since.

The money test! But compare the sum paid for a consummate work of art, perhaps the most perfect romance (I here use the word romance as implying something quite distinct from the novel) ever written, to wit, "The Scarlet Letter," with the price say of a "Trilby"?

No, George Eliot's criterium fails here!

Her next utterance will commend itself to all real lovers of literature.

"Then," she said in her slow, deliberate, conscientious way, and speaking from another point of view, that of literary excellence rather than of public acknowledgment, "then there is the test of sincerity."

A canon, the unassailableness of which none can deny. And if sincerity were the self-imposed test of every author, young, old, and middle-aged, immense would be the economy of pens, ink, and printer's copy—and the gain to literature. Of course the only, the final test of literature is duration, a foregone conclusion and point too evident to call for remark.

The last glimpse I caught of George Eliot and her metaphysician was a year or two later. The "money test" in her case may fairly be accepted, and the pair had just purchased a country house and a pretty victoria in which they drove to 5 Blandford Square. I believe this was their first drive. Madame Bodichon ran down the front steps,

embracing her friend affectionately as she sat, whilst Lewes said laughingly—"Of course, we remember, Barbara, that *you* never acknowledged us when we had no carriage."

But I am here anticipating. Let me add another memorial or two of this most historic visit, seven days during which George Eliot was literally at home, in some degree threw off the grand didactic air natural to her, part of herself, in truth, her very self.

I happened at this time to have a whitlow on the thumb of my right hand, which for some days after lancing had to be carefully bandaged. On Christmas morning when breakfast salutations were unusually cordial, George Eliot fancied that she had hurt my invalid thumb.

"I *always* do that sort of thing!" she cried, with a look of positive pain, and it was with no little difficulty that I could convince her to the contrary. The notion of having inflicted pain seemed intolerable. One can understand the sadness underlying a nature so sensitive.

"I *always* do that sort of thing!" The accentuation, impossible to describe it, reminds me of Rosamund's directly opposed speech, the callousness of her "What *can* I do?" when Lydgate was distracted with anxiety.

CHAPTER XXI

GEORGE ELIOT'S "BARBARA"

GEORGE ELIOT AT HIGH MASS—DAUBIGNY—OLD HASTINGS—"POOR LITTLE PRISCILLA"—PORTMAN HALL SCHOOL—ALGERIAN SOCIETY—UNDER THE THIRD EMPIRE—AFFORESTING—GIRTON COLLEGE—DR BODICHON

As I have said our parsonage belonged to a High Church, and the vicar's scourge, stained with expiatory blood, was not alone among suggestive surroundings. In that arctic weather who could help smiling at the large texts adorning the walls of breakfast, parlour, and dining-room. "Gird up your loins," "Carry not scrip nor staff," "Take up thy bed and walk," and so on.

The place and its present occupants seemed ill-assorted, yet perhaps such incongruousness was more imaginary than real.

Our High Church rectory adjoined the church, and on Christmas morning Madame Bodichon

carried off her friend to hear the fine musical service, Mass I feel inclined to call it.

Reverence is a quality absolutely insepar-able from true moral or intellectual greatness.

George Eliot hearkened with subdued rap-ture, the clear shrill voices of the choir, the majestic swell of the organ evidently evoking a religious mood, none the less pure or deep because unallied with formulary or outward observance.

The midnight service was proposed, but "No, dear, I would not on any account keep George up for us so late," said the great visitor, unlike her hostess in one respect. Whilst Madame Bodichon never had enough of the thing she loved, whether good company, down-right enjoyment or æsthetic impression, her feverish energy always craving expansion, George Eliot's nature needed repose. She did not in French phrase go out of her way in search of emotion.

When the pair departed we had quite a different but hardly less distinguished guest. This was the great French painter Daubigny,

then in grievous unquiet, not only for the welfare of his country but for the personal safety of those nearest to him. The weather remained arctic. Sketching out of doors was out of the question. French gaiety, genial companionship and artistic enthusiasm overcame all these obstacles.

In the exhilarating society of his hostess Daubigny could at intervals shake off the gloom of that awful period. Must I admit the fact? We were gayer, conversation was easier, existence more buoyant. Even Lewes' captivating boyishness and love of fun could not dispel a certain hush, a sobriety tending to pensiveness.

"Ah, Madame Bodichon, you always inspire me!" cried Daubigny to his hostess again and again.

The scenery of the Isle of Wight pleased him much less than the Fishmarket, Hastings, whither we accompanied him a little later. "Yonder flotilla of fishing boats, how delicious!" he would say repeatedly. The attraction of the old town was so strong that he settled

down with his son at a humble inn in its midst.

What would the great French painter say to Old Hastings of to-day? The view of the East Cliff immortalised by Turner is now disfigured by harbour works, a hideous red building, and farther off, the enormous chimney of a refuse destructor. But vandalism has not stopped short here. It is now proposed to destroy the East Cliff, as glorious a feature of coast scenery as England can show, for the purpose of a harbour railway!

This close friend of George Eliot's, Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon, was in every way worthy of the great novelist's confidence. Two women could not more essentially differ from each other, nor were it easy to find two equally gifted, in more entire sympathy.

The basis of Madame Bodichon's character was that very rare, I am tempted to say rarest, quality in my own sex, namely, a sense of abstract justice. Nationality, racial distinction, religion, even colour, for her were non-existent. A human being, whether Christian or Jew,

foreigner or English, white-skinned or black, remained a brother or sister. As little she cared for demarcations of fashion or routine. This immense largeness of sympathy and independence of mind, showed itself in the least little thing. Injustice she could never forgive.

We were one day discussing Hawthorne's fine story, "Brook Farm," and its superb heroine, when she said in her quick, decided manner——

"No, I do not like Zenobia at all, she was so unkind to poor little Priscilla."

From one point of view all women were poor little Priscillas to her. English law was the unkind Zenobia, and English law, as it unjustly affected her own sex, she combated for years tooth and nail. Her "Brief Summary of the Laws of England affecting Women," and other pamphlets on the subject, are models of their kind—lucid, dispassionate, unanswerable. Alike her time, her talents, and her money were lavished upon a cause of which she witnessed the triumph. It is, indeed, mainly owing to her initiative and exertions that working women

can now claim their own earnings. The Married Women's Property Act may be called a piece of legislation effected by the unenfranchised, no bad augury for the future, the time that sooner or later must come when rate-paying and a right to the poll will go together.

Long before a stone of her Girton College was laid, Madame Bodichon had verified her claim to the title of good citizen and large-hearted philanthropist. There were no Board Schools in her early days, and by way of minimising the ignorance immediately around her, she set up a school at Paddington for the daughters of artizans and the working classes generally. The experiment proved an entire success. The Portman Hall School flourished, its doors only being closed in consequence of Barbara Leigh Smith taking to herself a French husband and making her winter home beyond sea. Henceforth, she divided the year between Algeria and England.

"I always joked with Barbara about the probability of her marrying a Frenchman," Lewes said to me one day. "But I thought it would be

some gallant officer, his képi cocked on one side and his hands in the pockets of his baggy red trousers."

To fulfil the duties of an English citizen on French soil is no easy matter, but the tremendous energy, I should rather say, feverish activity of Madame Bodichon's temperament overcame all obstacles. It may be said that she succeeded in everything of a wholly impersonal nature, that is to say, in everything concerning not herself, her own interests and happiness, but the well-being of humanity, especially feminine humanity. Her great artistic gifts were sacrificed to purely philanthropic ends. Had she belonged to the middle-class workaday world, she would, in all probability, have achieved success and reputation as a water-colour painter. Dearly as she loved art, delightful as would have been such acknowledgment, she gave up her life to what she considered higher objects. A measure of success she could certainly claim. Frequenters of exhibitions five-and-twenty years ago will hardly have forgotten the brilliant sketches bearing the signature B. L. S. B.

Critics, among these Mr Ruskin, were not slow to appraise the poetic feeling, originality, and dash of every one. But art, no more than literature, can be made the handmaids of social science and duty, political economy, or educational reform. The holding of a salon, the afforesting or replanting of Algerian wastes, Women's Rights and Girton College ever retained the first place. To her own aspirations and gifts she proved a negligent stepmother.

Algerian society in the early years of the Third Empire was not what Madame de MacMahon and the austere Marshal afterwards made it. As a sample of morals and manners at that period take the following stories. Madame Z—, a young, handsome and adventuresome woman, moving in the best circles, had a mind to test the fidelity of her husband. Suspecting his presence at a certain ball to which ladies were not invited, she disguised herself as a Moorish girl and somehow obtained admittance. The pair danced together, and so fascinated was the inconstant, yet in one sense,

constant husband by her bright eyes, all he could see of the veiled face, that he made violent love, with what results to his after peace may be guessed.

Another of Dr Bodichon's famous stories was of a light-minded Frenchman who danced away, not his fortune, as the hero of Greek fable, but his own life. This votary of pleasure went to a ball and danced so furiously the whole night that on returning home, he took to his bed and died shortly afterwards of sheer exhaustion. He had literally danced himself to death.

These anecdotes illustrate the looseness and frivolity of fashionable life.

Political morality was at a still lower ebb. Alike in civil and military administration, corruption was the rule and honesty the exception.

But Marshal MacMahon would tolerate no more bribery and malpractices abroad—the Maréchale would have no more indecent dress or parade of dissolute conduct at home. The general tone improved greatly, and to this end

Madame Bodichon's salon contributed in no small degree. She was also a zealous pioneer in another most desirable cause, the promotion of Anglo-French intercourse, the uprooting of international antipathies, antipathies from which she herself was wholly free.

Another work which, in conjunction with her husband, she took up warmly, was the affforesting or replanting of denuded tracts in Algeria with the health-giving *Eucalyptus Globulus*. We had traversed the fever-stricken plains of Oran together and she never forgot the experience. "The fever," I wrote at the time, "every-one was falling ill, was ill, or had been ill of the fever." Since that journey, hundreds of thousands of acres in French Africa have been afforested or replanted, malaria disappearing with the rapid growth of the Blue-gum tree.

Among the first and most zealous afforesters were Madame Bodichon and her husband. They wrote about the Eucalyptus, talked about it, ordered large quantities of seed direct from Melbourne, and for years never ceased their efforts.

With the aged Faust they said :—

> "A swamp below the mountain stretches wide,
> Poisoning all husbandry. To draw away
> The deadly damp, that were the highest gain,
> I open place for millions here to dwell
> Busy and free, if not secure from ill."

It was Madame Bodichon's pen that first drew attention in England to the febrifugal qualities of the *Eucalyptus Globulus* or Blue-gum tree. She had hastily put a few facts and conclusions on paper which she read to George Henry Lewes. He touched up the piece and carried it off to the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, in which paper it appeared next day entitled, "Australian Forests and Algerian Deserts." This was so far back as the year 1868.

Even earlier, the scheme of a university for women had been mooted and planned by Madame Bodichon. With Miss Emily Davies, afterwards resident mistress, she discussed the plan morning, noon and night ; the result of their labours and confabulations being the very modest experiment at Hitchin, a house temporarily accommodating half a dozen students. Towards initiatory expenses

Madame Bodichon contributed £1000, a very large sum for one who could never be called a rich woman. I well remember the triumph with which she carried me off to see the college of her dreams in embryo. Who could foresee the magnificent building to arise just outside Cambridge a very few years later? Educationalists rallied round the foundress of Girton, money poured in, students were forthcoming by scores, but without the self-sacrifice of Barbara Bodichon, the scheme might long have proved abortive.

As I said in a former page, I have never been able to feel much enthusiasm about Women's Universities, Female Franchise, and the rest. Such questions from the first settled themselves in my mind as purely matters of abstract justice, unanswerable claims that must sooner or later be satisfied. Commonsense, public opinion and the British boast of fair play would sooner or later resent anomalies at variance alike with social and moral progress. But I could not, with Madame Bodichon, regard Girton College or Somerville Hall in the light

of a new era dawning upon humanity, a tremendous intellectual revolution. The glorious galaxy of Victorian women, Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Eliot, what could a college curriculum, a B.A., M.A., or wranglership have done for these? Moreover, in the words of Lessing, it is permitted to genius to remain ignorant of hundreds of things ordinary mortals have by heart. Had that wonderful Yorkshire girl donned cap and gown she would most likely have "modelled her style" on that of a *Times* leader; had the great poetess "gone up" and "come down" for three or four years, instead of "The Cry of the Children" and "The Great God Pan," we should have had cold, scholarly, unemotional, and consequently uninteresting verse after the manner of "Alaric at Rome"; had George Eliot, in early girlhood, quitted Griff for academic air, Mrs Poyser in all probability would never have exhilarated the world, its author being remembered by a second "Prolegomena" of Homer, or, who knows, a synthesis of universal philosophy?

But in the eyes of the generous and large-

souled foundress of Girton, examinations and college certificates were talismanic. A Girton student in her eyes was no mere woman, a semi-celestial nimbus encircled the head of every "sweet girl graduate."* Nor did enthusiasm end here. Wherever the interests of her own sex were concerned she showed the same eagerness of self-devotion.

"You remind me of the Arabs," I once said to her, "who pick up any scrap of paper bearing the name of Allah." Articles, leaders, reports, bits of news relating to Women's Rights she never tired of; at last during the long intervals we spent together every year, a compact was made. I undertook to read the daily papers omitting all paragraphs dealing with the wearisome topic; these she heard afterwards from another.

* Nothing appalled a well-known French authoress in America more (Mme. Th. Bentzon, en Amérique, 1895) than the addiction of girl students in that country to biological studies accompanied by experiments on living animals. On the same ground I have long parted company, metaphorically speaking, with Girton, Somerville, and the rest, being steadfastly opposed to any educational body or institution permitting such atrocities. Did I meet any young woman who had thus soiled her fingers, were she an Aristotle in petticoats, I would not shake hands with her.

In 1857 Barbara Leigh Smith had married Dr Eugène Bodichon, of Algiers, a man of singular character and considerable attainments.

One of the little knot known as the Republicans of '30, among his friends being Louis Blanc and Ledru Rollin, Dr Bodichon had rendered valuable services to the cause of democracy and colonisation. Strange as it may appear, after twenty years of conquest slavery existed in Algeria. Legislators and rulers had overlooked the famous Declaration of the Rights of Man abolishing slavery throughout the French dominions. When in 1848 the Breton doctor was named corresponding member of the Provisional Government, he recommended the liberation of slaves in the colony, a measure which was immediately put into force. Long before the introduction of the *Eucalyptus Globulus* into Algeria, he had insisted on the necessity of replanting denuded tracts, and his works on the country, especially from an ethnological point of view, are quoted by Henri Martin, and the geographer Elisée Réches. Carlyle read and re-read the doctor's monograph

on the first Napoleon and told his friend William Allingham that the perusal had modified his ideas of the French Cæsar.*

He died in 1885, and his noble wife survived him only a few years, bequeathing £1000 to Bedford Square College and £15,000 to her College of Girton.

* Included in a popular selection from Dr Bodichon's works. Leroux, Paris.

CHAPTER XXII

Leipzig

Dr B—— and his Bibles—A Strange Comradeship—Auerbach's Cellar—The Head of the House of Tauchnitz—International Bookselling—A Compromising Visitor—The Price of Glory

Disillusions ofttimes prove the crowning comedy of life; most mortifying checks may be its saving grace. As children who wail over a tumble, scratched knees and bleeding nose, yet afterwards glory in having clambered down a steep thorn beset bank, so do their elders delightedly recall escapades and peccadiloes anything but pleasant at the time. A golden, albeit valetudinarian holiday had passed as a dream. The Mediterranean traversed under a warm spring sky—Egypt, Asia Minor, the Greek Isles, Athens, Venice, Verona—all these were fresh in my mind when I found myself at Leipzig.

Never was disenchantment more complete,

awakening from radiant dreams more prosaic. Midsummer had come here with a leaden sky, gusty rain and an atmosphere of October. To make matters worse, the cheerful surroundings and engaging society bargained for proved a delusion and a snare. Instead of family life, I discovered that my only companion was to be a young law student, the daily board turned out a Barmecide's feast; all that I must evidently expect for my three pounds sterling weekly—at that time hotel charges in Germany—was the use of a bedroom containing four windows, and thrice or four times the number of Bibles. There were Bibles laid album-wise on the table, Bibles on each window-sill, Bibles on side-tables and brackets.

The recommendation to the four windows and the Bibles had come in this wise: my excellent friend Dr Paulus, the converter of the Jews at Frankfort, hearing that I wished to devote a little time to music and German, introduced me by letter to a certain Dr B——, a Biblical commentator of some renown, and a friend of the celebrated Delitsch. But Dr B—— was now a

very ancient man and confined to his room by infirmity; his wife was at Carlsbad taking the waters. The only representative of the pair turned out to be their son, a University student, more skilled in jurisprudence, slang and duelling than in domestic economy. Vegetable soup and potatoes for dinner, black bread and butter with a morsel of raw sausage for supper, seemed his only notion of a menu. But for good naturedness one would hardly meet my young student's match in Europe. Finding the daily bill of fare somewhat depressing and being unused to Adam's drink, I suggested the possibility of procuring English porter by way of a restorative.

"I'll get you some, liebes Fräulein," he said with alacrity; "they keep it at Auerbach's cellar."

We set off together, and an admirable cicerone he proved to the immortal scene of Faust's carouse. Guiness's stout was forthcoming, a bottle, for which of course I paid, being carried home in each of the young man's coatpockets. Had food and drink been thrown into the bargain, with the use of four windows and six-

teen Bibles, I should perhaps have stayed ; here was the rarest possible chance of obtaining an insight into German student life. My young host, moreover, possessed many endearing qualities. Obligingness itself, a slashing duellist, an adept in slang, he combined Gallic light-heartedness with Teutonic sobriety. Never for a moment did he forget that his guest was a well-bred young woman, he only forgot that she had a palate not inured to black bread and raw sausage, and that the prospect from four windows and the use of sixteen Bibles was rather dear at the money paid for them. Fortunately George Henry Lewes had given me introductions to the great houses of Tauchnitz and Brockhaus, also to learned friends. On pouring out my grievances to Baron Tauchnitz he immediately carried me off to the excellent Hotel Hauff, and there, but for an alarming spread of smallpox in the town, I should have spent some time.

Few figures in contemporary history more merit a feeling akin to veneration than the great publisher Bernhard Tauchnitz, none in our own

time have shed more lustre on the pacific annals of Germany. Diplomats, warriors, strategists, with victory and dominion, mete out tears and bloodshed, international bitterness and hardly uprooted hate.

Their contemporaries, after the pattern of Tauchnitz, make their influence felt in a higher, better way; linking race and race, people and people, with the touch of nature that makes all men kin, the irresistible spell of poetry and letters.

It may be urged that this princely publisher was no "moral inventor," to quote a very good expression of the late Cotter Morrison; instead, a mere keen, upright, and eminently successful man of business, who saw in the international traffic of books a road alike to popularity and fortune. I cannot for a moment admit this view of the case, a belittling of any high-minded career, simply because it has proved no less beneficial to the individual than to the world.

Two circumstances must here be borne in mind. The late Baron Tauchnitz was pre-eminently a man of literary tastes. The book-

lover stood before the publisher. He could not, of course, winnow all the chaff from the golden grain in his series. Several thousand volumes would naturally contain but a small percentage of masterpieces. In so far as was feasible he did make the Tauchnitz library of English authors representative. If claptrap and balderdash were not altogether excluded, the fault lay with the English public, not with foreign printing presses.

For my part, I have never entertained feelings of bitterness against American pirates. As no Anglo-American copyright formerly existed, authors on this side of the Atlantic were not legally robbed and thereby gained a million of readers, Goethe's *raison d'être* of authorship.* Baron Tauchnitz, although precisely in the position of American publishers, preferred the regal, the magnanimous way. He acted as if international copyright already existed, paying his authors alike, the grand folks and the little people, for the use of their

* "It is worth no man's while to write unless he can command a million of readers."—*Conversations with Eckermann.*

copyrights. And if it is gratifying to obtain a million readers in the land of the almighty dollar, still more agreeable is it to obtain the same number on the Continent with the addition of a cheque, George Eliot's money test. At this time, the Baron was a fine, portly, handsome man of sixty, in appearance recalling an English country gentleman, and the present head of the house of Tauchnitz was a tall stripling, already his father's right hand.

Some years later, I visited the family Schloss near Leipzig, bringing away delightful memories of a thoroughly German home, unspoiled by splendour.

It was delightful to hear the Baron, like Fräulein Fink, recite that old-world Lutheran grace before meals :—

> "Komm, Herr Jesus, Sei unser Gast,
> Und segne was Du becheert hast."

Pleasant also the "Mütterchen" on his lips, recalling Voss's good old pastor in "Luise." Soon after my visit to the Schloss, Baron Tauchnitz and his sweet, stately "Mütterchen" celebrated their golden wedding.

One noteworthy feature in the history of this great publishing house is this ; Leipzig has ever been the very stronghold of Socialism, the nucleus of Socialist agitation, yet no strike is recorded of the Tauchnitz workmen. From first to last, relations of employer and employed have remained on a frank and cordial footing. Here I would mention one of those preposterous inconsistencies, as common among nations as among individuals.

In autocratic Germany, footmen and coachmen are bearded and moustached no less than their masters. In democratic France and England, these ill-used beings are rigidly forbidden such manly adornment. I remember an imposing butler at Schloss Tauchnitz. He was extremely like the late Emperor Frederick, and quite as handsome.

George Henry Lewes, the Goethische Lewes, as greatly to his delight the Germans called him, had thrown wide for me all the doors of literary Leipzig. Another and even more interesting introduction threatened to close them after abrupt fashion. One of my friends of the International had given me a letter

to the great Socialist leader, whose voice still shakes the Reichstag, and whose influence is mightier far now than it was twenty-six years ago. A gentleman when bidden to pay his respects to a lady, cannot of course excuse himself. Two or three days after my arrival at the Hotel Hauff, and greatly to the consternation of house porter and waiter, Herr B——l appeared. We were in the midst of a most absorbing conversation when a second visitor was announced, this time, Lewes' friend, Professor Curtius, the learned translator of Darwin, and of course, a sworn enemy of Socialism in its mildest form.

Herr B——l, not inclined to act the part of overlapping guest, immediately withdrew. As soon as he was gone, the Professor eyed me narrowly, fidgeted on his chair, then got out, "My dear young lady, who on earth could have introduced you to that fellow?"

I mentioned the name of Herr B——l's English friend, a gentleman of ancient family, adding by way of palliative that I was studying Socialism from the literary point of view, and

wanted information at first hand—which was strictly correct.

"Well," he said with a grave air, "all I can say is that if you have such people calling on you, you must prepare yourself for smashed windows and Heaven knows what besides." Domiciliary visits, expulsion from the hotel, and perhaps graver peccadilloes were evidently in his mind.

The professor was relieved to find that I had given up my plan of spending some months in his town. Truth to tell, the usually cheerful and attractive town of Leipzig just now wore a sinister look. On the heels of glory, so-called, had come its inevitable retribution. The crowding of French prisoners, the massing together of sick and wounded soldiers and defective sanitation had brought about an alarming epidemic. Small-pox, as I have before mentioned, raged here as in some other parts of Germany. You could not walk a few yards without encountering barely recovered small-pox patients. Contagious diseases under normal circumstances have no terrors for me. But to

be stricken down in a foreign hotel and straightway bundled off to a hospital might well alarm spirits far more intrepid than my own. The weather, too, could not well be dismaller. My eight days in Leipzig had been eight days of perpetual rain. So on the coldest, rainiest and unfriendliest fourteenth of June I ever remember, I set out for the little Athens on the Ilm, I had always longed to know.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE GOETHES AT WEIMAR

First Impressions—Ottilie von Goethe and her sons—"Der Vater"—A Melancholy Jacques—A Goethe on Trollope

Less than a generation ago the sojourner at Weimar seemed all but a contemporary of its mighty spirits, just to have missed the meridian of its literary splendour. Goethe's daughter-in-law would then entertain her English visitors with talk of "der Vater"; elderly folks would chat of the stately old man so well pourtrayed for us by Eckermann. Schiller's daughter might be recognised in the street by her likeness to the poet. Herder's granddaughter, who remembered the famous interview between Napoleon and the Duchess Luise, was still living. A maiden lady would be pointed out to you as Fräulein Wieland, she too a granddaughter. The great names that have immortalised Weimar now live in history only

Goethe's race has become extinct, and the family house is turned into a museum. Schiller, Herder, Wieland have left none of their name and no direct descendants.

There is something peculiarly fascinating in this apparent nearness to a mighty epoch, this approaching the vesture-hem of earth's immortals. There are certain associations that in liveliness and force have the effect of veritable experience. We seem to be not merely affected but impressed, acted upon directly and not through the medium of others. Such was the nature of my intercourse with the Goethe family. The sun gleamed out as I entered the dear, friendly, quiet little town, its provincial air and grass grown streets offering a striking contrast to busy, populous, cosmopolitan Leipzig. And the Weimar before me* must have been a small metropolis compared to the Weimar of Goethe's youth, the tiny capital he entered so full of poetic frenzy a hundred years before.

* Just ten years later I revisited Weimar to find it immensely enlarged, and in a certain Philistine sense improved ; on all sides new streets, a wilderness of bricks and mortar, with its attendant dust, glare and ugliness.

I had brought with me a satchel of letters introductory, and although court receptions—so pleasant for strangers—were at an end, the theatre was about to be closed, and many other attractions for a time withdrawn, I settled down in the homely, comfortable Erb Prinz for a long stay and with the happiest expectations. When I first arrived, Goethe's house was closed, the large conspicuous structure not being accessible to tourists under any pretext whatever. Ottilie von Goethe was then occupying a modest flat in the Schiller Strasse, and it was there that I made her acquaintance.

I found an old lady dressed with scrupulous neatness, one might almost say, coquetry, her soft grey cashmere dress and white muslin kerchief recalling the Quaker matrons of my childhood. Goethe's fondly cherished daughter-in-law must have possessed no small share of beauty in youth, her bright eyes, silvery hair and vivacious expression rendered her handsome still, the lower part of the face being marred by a certain heaviness indicative of strong will.

When foreign speech is made the vehicle of thought, conversational powers are not to be adequately appraised. The Frau von Goethe was fond of talking English, which she spoke fairly well, not well enough, however, to give her thoughts free play. In German I could well fancy her shining in epigram, persiflage and repartee. Intellectual force she hardly possessed.

"I am very glad at all times to welcome the countrywomen of my late dear friend Mrs Jameson," she said, receiving me with the urbanity and "grand air" of a great lady, such indeed she had been all her life. The very atmosphere of a court hung still about attitude, speech and intonation. Every word was uttered deliberately and with what I will unhesitatingly call well-bred distinctness. Then she asked me many interesting questions about the higher education of women and its progress in England. My report of Madame Bodichon's Hitchen College and the Girton scheme were listened to with great attention.

"If my own daughter had lived," she said,

"the college you describe is what I should have desired for her."

The golden-haired little granddaughter Irma, whom Thackeray mentions in his charming letter to Lewes (see the Life of Goethe), died at the age of sixteen. Her brothers Auguste and Wolfgang were now elderly men. But such sorrows are immortal. As Ottilie von Goethe named the little girl laid to rest more than a generation before, her face saddened, her voice became tremulous with emotion. From time to time she dropped into German, recalling the past, positively thrilling me with the words, "Der Vater sagte dies, der Vater meinte das" (my father said this, my father thought that).

Could it be? Was I in sober earnest chatting with Goethe's daughter-in-law, the fondling of his old age, the one being in the world privileged to caress, tease and even playfully thwart him? Not perhaps always playfully! There is a story recorded by Eckermann which shows that to Ottilie the author of "Faust" was at times only a plaguesome, cantankerous old father-in-law. The great man had given her some archæo-

logical treasure, and after the manner of many too lavish givers, wanted his gift back again. "No, father," stoutly replied Ottilie, "you gave me the object. It is now mine and I cannot part with it." The story is highly characteristic of the petted young widow, of a fireside goddess who could do anything.

One of these references to "der Vater" was noteworthy.

"In my father's time," she said in German, "people used to meet and discuss things worth talking about. Now the talk of society consists of mere idle gossip and chatter" ("Plaudern und Schwätzen").

She had an amusing horror of being written about in her life-time, either by English travellers or her own country folks, but was very hospitable to anyone introduced by a friend. Alas! the acquaintance who rendered me this inestimable service has been long since lost to sight. If these lines should ever meet his eyes I hope he will assure himself of my life-long gratitude.

Before my stay was over the Frau von

Goethe had moved back into the poet's house, and here I spent a memorable evening. She occupied with her two sons the upper storey, in winter giving small but agreeable little gatherings, the Grand Duke and Duchess often dropping in without ceremony.

Fine bronzes, life size, adorned the entrance hall, but that part of the house occupied by Goethe was shut up, no one being ever invited to see his rooms, and no one ever venturing to demand the privilege.

I found myself in a pretty little drawing-room, a melancholy, handsome man already past middle life holding out his hand to me on the threshold.

"My son Wolfgang," said the hostess, and soon after we passed into an adjoining room to tea, an English lady guest presiding at the tea-pot, her young daughter, the kind friend who had introduced me to the Goethe family and one or two others, making up the party.

The simple board, spread with brown bread and butter and pfefferkuchen or gingerbread, had nothing to distinguish it from any other German

tea-table, but how did association impart pomp and circumstance! To break bread with Goethe's grandson seemed next door to sitting down to tea with descendants of Shakespeare who had gazed upon his face and prattled on his knee, and whether of set purpose or from mere habit, this living likeness of the poet perpetually recalled his august ancestor. Those startling words, "der Grossvater" (my grandfather), again and again rose to his lips, not uttered vauntingly but with a certain pensive, tempered pride.

Yes, a melancholy Jacques was this inheritor of the greatest name of modern Europe, and no wonder! To come of honourable stock is coveted of all. But what mortal shoulders could adequately sustain such Atlantean burden, keep up legend so glorious?

"The two sons of Ottilie and Auguste von Goethe," said to me an old Weimaraner who knew them well, "are both able and highly accomplished men, men who might, under other circumstances, have made a position and even a reputation for themselves. But they have

been dwarfed, etiolated, by the shadow of that mighty tree, the name of Goethe."

The thought suggests itself, would not diplomacy have offered a career to gentlemen so distinguished and courtly? We must remember the closeness of the ties that bound them to Weimar, and the insignificance of their little state considered as a body politic, also that the capacities of the brothers lay in quite another direction. Both were admirable musicians and of a literary and artistic turn.

Perhaps domestic circumstances may have had something to do with this look of habitual resignation, this apparent acceptance rather than relish of existence. Rumour spoke of former financial difficulties, of other complications equally hampering. Be this as it may, the fact remained. The handsome refined face before me was that of a man whose life has proved a failure. And a few years later both grandsons of Goethe passed away, and the world was as if it had known them not.

Conversation at the tea-table was light and pleasant, a large portion falling to my share.

Herr von Goethe spoke English pretty well, occasionally lapsing into German. He showed considerable knowledge of our literature, old and new, and we had a long discussion on the contemporary English novel.

"No one entertains heartier admiration for Anthony Trollope's talent than myself," I said, when his name had come up. "But I confess, the commonplaceness of his characters wearies me. In a novel, as in real life, I prefer to meet the rare, the exceptional."

"There," put in Goethe's grandson warmly, and speaking German, "I entirely disagree with you. When I read fiction I find more amusement and instruction in stories like Trollope's, dealing as they do with commonplace everyday folks such as one meets with in daily life, rather than in pourtrayal of abnormal or out of the way types. Der Grossvater auch meinte (my grandfather was also of this opinion)— "

Here he quoted a sentence of Goethe in support of his views, whether from hearsay or a printed work I forget. We argued the

question for sometime, the others listening. I could not unfortunately back up my theory with the words of a French critic who has since lived and died, leaving behind him a brilliant meteor-like reputation. "Genius," says J. M. Guyau, "occupies itself with possibilities, rather than with realities. We recognise true genius by its power of outstepping the real and yet keeping within limits of the possible." *

Our discussion over, my disputant turned with kindly interest to his mother's youngest guest, the English schoolgirl before mentioned, drawing her out, making her feel at home. I noticed the little trait, indicating as it did not only good manners but real amiability. One could hardly help regretting that Wolfgang von Goethe had not a fireside and a family circle of his own. Both brothers, I add, were unmarried. At this time the younger was absent, and I never met him.

Politics, of course, were not touched upon, nor did we talk of the Franco-German war so

* Only one of many passages in Guyau referring to this most interesting subject, the limits of art.

lately ended. One point struck me in discussing literature with the Frau von Goethe, namely, her aversion to French language and letters. This was all the more surprising as there was no little of the Frenchwoman about her. She died a year after my visit and her sons soon followed her to the grave.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE ABBÉ LISZT

A PHENOMENAL FOURTH FINGER—A TABLE D'HÔTE GROUP—TAUSIG—FRÄULEIN CONSTANCE—A HISTORIC GLASS OF CHAMPAGNE

I KNOW not how it may be nowadays, but formerly host and hostess of the *Erb Prinz* presided at the midday table d'hôte. The Frau H——, bless her kindly heart! finding that I was alone, made me sit by her side, an arrangement advantageous in many ways. I felt one of the family circle, I chatted in German and I learned all that was going on.

Now I know very little of English landladies, but I should hardly expect from them the kind and quality of conversation I heard here. The Frau H——, a florid, homely-looking lady, and her brother-in-law and partner, for she was a widow, would discuss with their friends or clientêle, Wagner's music, the drama, past and

present, new works of the *Kunstschule* or academy, and kindred topics. Not only was their conversation animated and spontaneous, but they displayed no little artistic knowledge and insight. And busy as was mine hostess she rarely missed a good concert or play.

I have ever loved to fraternise with all sorts and conditions of men, and among Frau H——'s acquaintances was a charming young actress, whom I remember with pleasure. There was a depth of feeling about her, mingled with much sparkle and sweetness, that recalled the subject of Goethe's poetic apotheosis, those lovely lines beginning :—

> "Als eine Blume zeigt sie sich der Welt."

(" Her apparition was as some sweet flower.") With this fascinating yet wholly unspoiled girl and her fellow actors and family I picnic'd in the country, bringing away one ineffaceable impression. The evident sincerity of these modestly paid artistes brought back "Wilhelm Meister," and seemed a living testimony to Goethe's influence. My young tragedian cheer-

fully and as a matter of course supported her younger brothers and sisters; here was no feverish unrest, no craving for world-wide triumph or dazzling reward. Devotion to art and duty dominated every other feeling.

Frau H—— had a little daughter attending a day-school; on learning that one of my objects was musical study, she immediately placed her Mariechen's piano at my disposal. Whenever I chose, therefore, I could leave my nice little room overlooking the market-place and practice in the parlour below. Here I cannot help expressing my astoundment at the extreme benignity with which I have ever been treated in all countries and by every class. Such things are especially agreeable when dealing with foreign nationalities. They testify to the fact insisted upon by David Hume and P. G. Hamerton, namely, that men are much of a muchness all the world over, extraneous circumstances, racial distinctions, accidents of climate and language being merely skin deep.

I had not partaken of the twelve o'clock ordinary many times when I noticed a remark-

able figure at the foot of the table, a figure once seen impossible to forget.

It was that of an elderly priest, tall, almost Herculean in stature, and spare to lankness, his long hair hanging down "in silver slips," his face wearing a strange look only to be expressed by the word illumination, his eyes of diamond-like piercingness and brilliance. But even more striking than build and physiognomy were the hands, moved so restlessly and conspicuously. It could not be said that those long, nervous, expressive hands were out of proportion with limbs so large; the noteworthy characteristic was length of each little finger, the fourth indeed almost equalled in size the pointer. As he sat at table, whether manipulating knife and fork or chatting to his neighbours, his hands were never for a moment still. It seemed as if they were restless spirits not to be coerced into passiveness.

"Who is that extraordinary being?" I whispered to my landlady.

"Don't you recognise him?" was the astonished reply. "It is the Abbé Liszt."

Truth to tell, the name of Liszt sounded almost like a resurrection in my ears. So many years had passed since the great Hungarian's appearance in England, that, except to musicians, he was a mere name. The everyday English world had wellnigh forgotten even that; from the general memory he had completely faded.

I now discovered that at Weimar Liszt was enthroned as a pontiff, a demi-god. To the little world of his followers and pupils, indeed, Weimar meant Liszt and Liszt only. In their eyes Liszt was now the sun in that firmament formerly lighted by Goethe. But to return to the table d'hôte group.

The less said about unpleasant people the better, but it is incumbent upon me to mention his entourage, a marked and often regrettable feature in the career of genius. The present contrast between a man of unmistakable distinction and his companions was, moreover, so striking, it shed so much light upon Liszt's history, that I feel bound here to say a few words.

On his right hand there sat a particularly plain, unattractive looking woman of decided Slav origin. She was middle-aged, her grown-up daughter sat next, and the hour was noon, yet her dress was sufficiently *décolleté* for an evening party, and her sleeves only reached the elbow. The young lady beside her hardly called for notice; she said little and seemed apt at playing the part of dummy. But the adjoining figure evoked compassion. Whilst the elderly coquette, his wife, behaved after the manner of a love-sick schoolgirl, this poor semblance of a man neither opened his lips nor showed the slightest cognizance of what was going on around him. Native infirmity or paralysis had reduced him to the condition of a huge ungainly breathing automaton. Behind his chair stood a valet who adjusted his master's napkin, cut up his food, and otherwise ministered to his wants.

It would be difficult to say which circumstance here most painfully affected the mind—the immodesty of this wife and mother, the part of spectator assigned to a daughter of twenty,

witness of her mother's amours, or the possible semi-consciousness of the man, her father. Some faint glimmering of the truth must surely have reached his mind however feeble.

"The Baroness X Y Z, she is madly in love with Liszt; and that is her imbecile husband and daughter," whispered my hostess.

The explanation was unnecessary. In a well-conducted maiden those foolish feminine fetches and deep artifices might have evoked a smile. In a matron with husband and daughter by her side, and a score or more of lookers-on, the scene was positively loathsome. Now she would feign inability to eat, and Liszt must transfer some choice morsel from his own plate to hers, now she could not prepare properly her Alpine strawberries and he must perform the task, all these little tricks being accompanied with lackadaisical—to use a mild word—smiles and insinuating gestures. From Sarah Bernhardt herself in *Phédre* this woman could have learned nothing.

Personal fascination is perhaps of all Pandora's gifts the most to be deprecated. Liszt, its

victim, is hardly blameworthy here. Wherever he went sentimentalists and coquettes fluttered about him as moths round a candle. Under such circumstances a man of his type is defenceless. More wholesome and agreeable to witness was the devotion of his own sex, pupils like the late Walter Bache and Tausig.

A day or two later we were all sitting at dinner when poor Tausig burst in, having just arrived unexpectedly from Leipzig. Liszt jumped up, his whole being transformed, spontaneous joy replacing forced smiles and cozened approval. Master and pupil embraced cordially as emperors when concocting an alliance, then the new-comer was made room for, and dinner went on.

That afternoon I heard some wonderful pianoforte playing in the hotel, and I said to myself, Liszt, Tausig, or a demon! It was both. I should perhaps say, all three. The place seemed shaken with superhuman sound.

Tausig was of striking appearance, but looked by no means in good health. Although a young man he was florid and heavy almost to obesity,

having sacrificed health and hygiene to the piano. And a very few weeks later came news of his death from typhoid fever at Leipzig. The loss of his greatest pupil affected the Maestro deeply.

Throughout these summer months Liszt remained in his pretty villa, giving musical parties every Sunday afternoon, himself taking part, playing Beethoven, so said authorities, as no one had ever played Beethoven before, or is in the least likely to play Beethoven again.

But the Open Sesame of such a salon, how on earth to obtain it? I sounded Weimar friends, but one and all gave a melancholy shake of the head. Except to a very few musical people, they said, Liszt was absolutely unapproachable, a newspaper reporter might just as well try to interview the Czar. And the Goethe family and Liszt were not on visiting terms. I had no chance of meeting, rather hearing, the great man in Frau von Goethe's pleasant drawing-room. The little court, so hospitable ever to English visitors, and of

which Liszt was the darling, had removed to Eisenach.

In despair I bethought me of Walter Bache, whose most intimate London friends I knew intimately also. An answer came back by return of post, chilling in its positiveness. "Quite useless to ask Bache for such a favour, he would not, I know, take upon himself the responsibility on any account whatever."

The Peri outside Paradise was not to be thus discouraged. I discovered that the solution of this problem, as is generally the case with others far knottier, lay close at hand. My musical professor at this time happened to be a sweet and romantic girl, more devoted to Liszt, if that were possible, than the rest of his pupils. Fräulein Constance, as I will call her, was about twenty-five, and, without actual beauty, possessed infinite charm and winningness. Perhaps she was more calculated to inspire mere affection and regard than anything like passion in the other sex. She was what her country people called "schwärmerisch," *i.e.*, sentimental and dreamy, and as a rule, men do not like

sentimentalists. Here and there indeed you find a man who, to quote Mrs Lynn Linton, "likes women who scream easily." The majority prefer smiles to sighs, spirit to sentiment, and the plain face of a girl absolutely at one with herself and the world, to faultless loveliness of lackadaisical pattern.

Fräulein Constance was an excellent musician and gained a very good livelihood * in this way; from October to May she resided at Cannes, finding pupils among rich valetudinarians. The summer months she spent at Weimar, sunning herself in the presence of her adored master.

One day we had been playing one of Schubert's magnificent duets, Liszt's name came up, and I spoke of my disappointment in failing to obtain an introduction to him.

"Liebes Fräulein," she said, with an air of astonishment, "why, in Heaven's name, did you not mention this to me before? I shall be delighted to manage the thing for you."

Which she did. That very evening came

* Perhaps a handsome competence were the better term. At Weimar in 1871 a good music-mistress ranked herself lucky indeed if she earned £70 a year!

Liszt's visiting-card with an invitation to his Sunday afternoons, and on the following day our acquaintance began after amusing fashion enough.

Upon this occasion Liszt was not dining with the Russian party, but with other friends at a side table. Soon champagne appeared for the usual health drinking, Liszt doing the honours. I now saw him fill a glass and hand it to the waiter in attendance with whispered instructions.

That glass of champagne was brought round to me, straightway Liszt's tall figure appeared above the heads of the rest, I rose also and we smiled, bowed and drank to each other from opposite sides of the room.

"Dear fellow, how like him!" cried George Henry Lewes, when I afterwards narrated the incident in Blandford Square.

Dinner over, I add that Liszt sought me out, we shook hands cordially, and I saw my dearest wishes accomplished.

CHAPTER XXV

THE ABBÉ LISZT—*continued*

AVE MARIS STELLA — LISZT IMPROVISING — A PICNIC — "KEINE FORELLEN!"—A TICKLISH CHARGE—A TRAGIC LOVE STORY

ON the following Sunday took place a ceremonial of pathetic interest. The Abbé Liszt had promised to play his own beautiful Ave Maris Stella * on the organ of a little Catholic Church close to his own villa.

His performance, needless to say, an event of the utmost rarity, was given in furtherance of some charitable scheme. Needless to say also that miracles were worked with a second-rate little organ, and that anyone with musical knowledge or instinct must here have recognised the master, "der Einzige," with Jean Paul to be acclaimed, "The Only One."

* Also arranged for piano. I regret I cannot name key, having presented my copy to my friend the now well-known impressionist and highly-accomplished musician, Mr Brabazon Brabazon.

The incident also served to show Liszt's innate sweetness of character, a sweetness unspoiled by fulsome homage and feminine following carried to the pitch of positive molestation.

A number of English schoolgirls, pupils of his own pupils, were present, and he kindly invited them all to that afternoon's reception at his house. Thither then, for the short service ended when the musical matinée was about to begin, we all trooped, a pert Miss of fourteen remarking to me on the way—

"Of course, as mamma says, Liszt is a bad man and we ought not to visit him, but attending a concert at his house is quite another matter."

The speech remains in my memory as illustrative of that insular cant so odious to foreigners. Of course this British matron's duty was clear, either to say, "No, my dear, I do not, for reasons I cannot explain, approve of the Abbé Liszt, so we must stay at home," or else to have held her tongue about "the bad man." But no. "We have heard Liszt play," would sound so well in England! It is just this sort

of Philistinism that makes us hated and hate ourselves abroad.

We flocked in, Liszt's handsome drawing-room being crowded to its utmost capacity. First of all, one of Spohr's lovely Quartets was perfectly played, the executants being friends of their host, then uninvited the tall strange figure in priestly garb, his white locks streaming on his shoulders, moved towards the piano. A genius must ever be greater, more striking in expressing himself rather than in his interpretations, however sublime, of others. I am glad, therefore, that upon both occasions it was Liszt himself I heard rather than those matchless renderings of Beethoven, for which he was so famous.

I will here add that to my thinking a pianoforte improvisation, except by a Liszt, is of all performances the least inspiring, perhaps indeed the most wearisome. Any fair musician can put together pretty musical phrases, keep his fingers going with passionless harmonies. But Liszt was so distracted, so torn to pieces, by that terrible gift of personal fascination, the moments

he could give to composition were so furtive and so irregular that very likely his finest works were never put upon paper. Be this as it may, he did not now merely improvise, he composed, as he went along, the performance being no dreamy, airy fantasia, vague as the melodies of an Æolian harp, but a sublime musical whole, a work impossible to describe or categorize, but having a beginning, a middle and an end, having, moreover, that passionate outpouring of soul by which alone we are transported into the highest regions of art and poetry.

The hush was intense, for not on one but on all had the spell fallen. When that strange inspired figure rose as much moved by his own powers as his listeners, no one spoke. Not even the four musicians seemed able to utter a word. I do not know what impelled me, rather emboldened me, for, going up to him I said in French, his favourite language,—

"Ah, Monsieur l'Abbé, vous nous avez transporté dans le Paradis!" (Ah! Monsieur l'Abbé, you transported us all to Paradise.) He did not speak but clasping both my hands

in his own, long pressed them to his heart by way of reply. On my return to the hotel I in turn improvised, sending him the following lines :—

Improvisation on Improvisation.

To the Abbé Liszt.

Fain would I praise such poetry as thine,
In fitting measures as a poet should ;
But ah ! thy music brings a deeper mood,
And only tears acknowledge the divine.

He at once wrote a little note of thanks * in French, especially thanking me for the last words. "Ce beau vers," this beautiful line. Liszt's excessive amiability, an amiability amounting to positive weakness, was soon evinced in another matter.

One day Fräulein Constance came to me with a radiant face. She had got up a little picnic that afternoon in my honour, and the Maestro had promised to be of the party.

"We start at three o'clock for Tieffurt," she

* I regret that I cannot here give this letter. I have ever entertained a horror of accumulation and long ago gave it with a sweet note from G. Eliot to the son of my late learned and very dear friend, Mr Watkiss Lloyd.

said, "stroll about for an hour or two, then take tea at the little restaurant. I have telegraphed for trout, the Herr Doctor adores trout. Heaven forbid that I should be disappointed!"

My young friend's lodging looked upon the park, and pleasant was the brief interval of anticipatory waiting. True enough Liszt kept his word. About half an hour after the time appointed we drove off, the two seats of honour being assigned to another guest, a violinist, and myself, on the seat opposite sitting Liszt, Fräulein Constance on one side, another pupil of his, Fräulein Anna —— on the other, an arrangement that seemed to amuse him and pleased the two girls mightily.

The picnic began gaily. Under such circumstances Liszt was charming. He could unbend without effort and enjoy common pleasures as if he had been an ordinary mortal. He frolicked with his pupils, evidently delighting in this self-abandonment. The weather too was everything to be desired. Goethe's favourite haunt looked especially cool and inviting after the dust and glare of Weimar.

But no sooner had we arrived than a great chagrin was in store for our hostess.

"Es gibt keine Forellen!" (There is no trout!) she cried, ready to burst into tears. One might have supposed from her mortification that Liszt was some poor protégé, some out-at-elbow Bohemian to whom the proposed delicacy was an event, instead of a great man and petted courtier who could dine off gold and silver whenever he pleased.

Fräulein Constance had really tears in her eyes when we sat down to tea, her friend Anna was hardly less concerned, but Liszt soon made both smile again. He placed himself between the pair, with his own hands spread brown bread and butter for each, the girls smacking their lips over each enchanted morsel, exclaiming—

"Ach! es schmeckt so gut!" (It tastes so sweet!)

The violinist and myself also did our best to mitigate the disappointment. We were in truth hungry, and the rye bread, fresh butter and fruit cakes were excellent.

"Now tell us Erfurt news" (Erzählen von

Erfurt), Liszt said to Fräulein Anna when he turned to his own plate. The young lady had just visited Luther's town and every scrap of musical gossip she brought back interested her listener. Then Liszt chatted with myself about his devoted disciple Walter Bache, whom I had often met in London, the Lewes' and others. The meal passed off agreeably enough, but quite without exhilaration. Somehow or other, it is always thus. Mischievous little sprites seem bent upon checking mortal expectations when raised too high, encroachments upon their own elf-land!

We were in "Tieffurt's Thal," Goethe's loved little valley. Alike in park and château every object reminded us of the poet and his time, of those free and easy little banquets at which Carl August, the Duchess Amalia, Goethe, Schiller, Herder and Wieland assisted. Liszt gave me his arm as we sauntered through the quaint little palace in which the Duchess received her great friends without ceremony; what ceremony indeed was possible in such a doll's house? Wonderful memories crowded upon us; we were a well-assorted company, the

twilight of late summer was sweet, yet one and all subsided into calm and commonplace.

It was growing dusk when we drove into Weimar, a group of girls awaiting us just outside the park gate. Liszt was to get down here, and these adorers wanted to salute the master on his way home. As he alighted they pressed forward, each catching at his hands, kissing them with what can only be called religious fervour. He shook off the pretty intruders, good-naturedly pooh-poohing the too fond tribute.

"There, there, my children, that will do," he said, hastening away, doubtless to find a second bevy of devotees at his door. That dæmonic irresistibleness, that magnetic influence felt not only by the other sex but his own, was an ever-present thorn in the flesh; to a passionately artistic and creative nature like his, it could not be otherwise. And unfortunately Pandora had not accorded a counterpoise, the wholesome antidote of moroseness, the power of being irresponsive and occasionally unapproachable. Without this good gift the most dazzling genius may be wasted.

I do not know exactly what happened after this picnic, but the relations of my charming young music mistress and her adored Maestro evidently underwent change. It also became plain to me that Fräulein Constance's feeling for Liszt was no mere girlish sentiment, or what her country people called "schwärmerei," but a deep consuming passion, the sort and degree of passion that drives men into wild excesses and women either into wasting sickness or worse still, mental aberration.

Liszt had absented himself for a few days, Fräulein Constance following him to Erfurt or Eisenach, I forget which; was it this step, this fond espial that alienated or at least cooled her master's affection? She gave no explanation, only hinted at some little misunderstanding, and meantime would I, oh! would I see the Herr Doctor and place in his hands a letter too confidential for post or ordinary messenger?

I paused before replying. The poor girl's distress was contagious. Short of disturbing

Liszt I would have done any, every thing to oblige her. But the request of a private interview for such a purpose, and of one whose privacy was so little respected? No, I could not bring my mind to the step.

I satisfied her, however, with the assurance that the letter should be delivered either by myself or a trusty substitute. On this understanding it was confided to me. A day or two afterwards Fräulein Constance seemed in usual spirits. The little cloud had apparently passed over, all was as before. A lover's quarrel may be easily made up. What happy issue can await such complications as these? on the one hand, a girl's self-immolating devotion, on the other, the shrinking, unwillingly accorded tenderness of an elderly man to whom by this time the very thought of a woman's fancy must have been terrible. I shall ever believe that had he with the priestly robe adopted an ascetic rigidly artistic life, he would have rivalled Wagner —of whom, by the way, I am no enthusiast— as a composer.

Exactly ten years later, I revisited Weimar,

and one of my first enquiries was after my dove-eyed Fräulein Constance.

"Fräulein Constance ist verschollen" (is vanished), was the reply.

The unhappy girl had vanished, from mortal ken, not alas! finding harbourage in some quiet God's acre, but within the prison walls of a *Maison de Santé.* Love for Liszt had unhinged her reason!

CHAPTER XXVI

DR THOMAS WILSON

Souvenirs of George Eliot and Carlyle—Sketch of a Career—Mirage—Nozrani in Egypt—"The Clementine Homilies"

It has been my good fortune to enjoy the warm friendship, I may say, the closest, most affectionate intimacy of many good and gifted men, English and French. From none have I learned so much, to none am I more indebted than to the subject of the present chapter.

There was living at Weimar during my stay in 1871 an old friend of George Eliot and Carlyle, a man wholly unknown to fame, but hardly less deserving of a biographer than his great familiars. For Dr Thomas Wilson was no mere chance acquaintance of the novelist and the sage. He had known George Eliot and George Henry Lewes long before the publication of "Adam Bede," whilst his friendship with

Carlyle, begun a generation before, was only ended by death. Every time he visited England, Dr Wilson spent a few quiet hours at the Priory and at Cheyne Walk; and it was his privilege to see both these friends a few months before they died.

I have never myself been able to entertain much enthusiasm for the apologist of brute force, of blood and iron policy, of slavery. Carlyle's personality too, as pourtrayed, for I never saw him, has ever been unattractive to me.* Dr Wilson's table-talk and anecdotes, nevertheless, could but be full of interest. And very likely from the lips of this high-minded friend fell the most withering sarcasm ever uttered on Carlyle's

* Here is an anecdote I can vouch for, well worthy of the man who wrote on "The Nigger Question." A gentleman well known in the world of letters and society having with him his young son, happened to meet Carlyle in the street. "I am so glad," exclaimed the former. "This is the second great man my boy has seen to-day." "And the first?" sneered Carlyle. The other named the greatest living philosopher, a man whose fame is world wide. "The unending ass!" retorted the sage of Chelsea. The story is of a piece with his biography. Of any intellectual rivalship he seemed furiously jealous, witness his brutalities about George Eliot and other women writers.

system. The pair were holding earnest converse one day when Dr Wilson turned to him sharply with the question—

"Come now, my friend, answer me. Jesus Christ on the Cross now, do you call that success?"

Carlyle was dumb. My Weimar friend, although always cutting short unsavoury topics, could not help dropping pregnant hints now and then. "That terrible cat and dog life," he would say, with an expression of disgust, when alluding to Carlyle's fireside. Long before a word had appeared about it in print, I learned of the tragedy that later became so notorious, "the cat and dog life" of Jane and Thomas Carlyle.

Dr Wilson was living at Weimar on the occasion of George Eliot's first visit to Germany with George Henry Lewes. He used to smile as he recalled a certain table d'hôte experience; in the midst of chattering tourists and the clatter of dishes, this grave young woman propounding theories of human and cosmogonic destiny, herself as utterly isolated from such surroundings

as if in their little study at home. The pair then occupied modest lodgings in Regent's Park.

Dr Wilson's career was full of nobleness and pathos. Blessed—or shall I say cursed—with transparent sincerity of mind, with a conscientiousness that could brook no *viâ media*, he had thrown up the most dazzling prospects rather than palter with the cause of Truth.

Of good clerical family, possessed of academic distinction, and every becoming personal endowment, he had entered the Church, promising to prove one of her brightest ornaments, certain of promotion, dignities, and the praise of men.

That embarrassing gift of a conscience soon interfered with these brilliant prospects. Already preferment was his, ecclesiastical honours also, when the other, the moral side of the question, forced itself upon his mind. Diligently and desperately he set to work, dissected the Thirty-Nine Articles, saw clear as day that acceptance of them by any intelligent being must be make-belief, that in consequence his own life was a sham, payment for preaching what no man in his senses could believe, what furthermore, no

man, woman or child should be asked to believe.

Self-questioning of such a mind could only end one way. The dilemma landed him in Weimar, teacher of English in a ladies' college. It was by Carlyle's advice that he betook himself to the illustrious little capital. There, despite the modesty of his position and circumstances, he received every consideration at the hand of the Grand Duke and his wife. Of the Duchess he was an especial favourite. Anxious to retain a resident so distinguished, the ducal pair made over to his use a delightful old manor-house outside the town, in which he could receive young Englishmen preparing for examinations.

In the meantime Dr Wilson had married a German lady, one of the lady professors or patronesses, I forget which, of the ladies' school just mentioned. This highly educated, amiable, and most capable woman brought to the fireside exactly those qualities in which her husband was deficient, namely, a capacity for business and practical affairs, the tact, method, and forethought necessary in all who have to provide for

their own future. The middle-aged marriage answered admirably, and it was mainly owing to Mrs Wilson's influence and exertions that years stole on without pecuniary cares.

At this time the Wilsons occupied the ducal residence alluded to, as pleasant a country house as suburban Weimar could show, and there I ever received affectionate welcome.

Dr Wilson was now just sixty, and had not with his heresies cast off clerical physiognomy. He looked indeed like a man born for the Primacy itself. The teaching of German school-girls, the coaching of school-boys, could not detract one iota from a personal dignity that was absolutely unassailable. He was not without the restlessness and irritability inseparable from fastidious natures. He ever commanded respect. Of course such a man must have been more than human to feel satisfied with his actual position, and here I come to the real pathos of Dr Wilson's history.

The mere act of renunciation cannot satisfy a heroic nature; it craves expression, the kind of action to be acquiesced in, the fulfilment of

destiny. The first part of his life had been a storm, a cataclysm, the second, and perhaps the sadder of the two, was a mirage. As I have mentioned, Dr Wilson was at this time just sixty, and no more living in the present than an exile or a prisoner counting the hours until release. Nor was he changed in this respect when ten years later I spent several months near the Wilsons, then removed to Eisenach, and a few years later still, on the occasion of his visit to Hastings, he was the same, a mirage-haunted man, a dreamer of dreams!

His project was this—to settle in London, hire some building as a free church, and there preach Christianity, untravestied, unadulterated by Councils and Synods, St Augustines and St Athanasiuses. Had my great friend lived a couple of hundred years ago he would most assuredly have been imprisoned, mutilated, perhaps put to a horrible death. Could he have secured a West-End pulpit in the seventies he might have done what Salvationists have effected in the slums. "I have the gift of speech," he would say wistfully, again and again going over the plan.

But difficulties seemed insuperable. To a man so delicate-minded the notion of expatriating his wife was painful in the extreme. Again, his scheme involved outlay rather than remuneration. And later, when mainly owing to that devoted wife's exertions, a modest competence was his, other objections arose. Despite enormous taxation, housekeeping in Germany was simpler, more economical than in London. And he was growing old. Who could say? His experiment might turn out a failure; he tried too late.

The mirage haunted him persistently nevertheless, and as he would dwell on the little church of his dreams, a strange light came into his face, he seemed to catch a Divine efflatus, some faint reflex of that

"Strong Son of God, Immortal Love,"

to Whom he ever seemed so near.

Dr Wilson was no mere intellectual stimulator after the manner of George Henry Lewes, no imparter of encyclopædic knowledge or generalisation. What he did was to open his listener's

mind to the deep spiritual meaning of life and life's teachers, revealed in nature or in books.

Quite naturally Schiller was a favourite author, and one of his favourite pieces of writing was the collection of "Letters on the Æsthetic Education of Mankind." How much do we learn from our friends' choicest books, the books that have become part of themselves! Another boon companion was Seneca's Epistles. The "Clementine Homilies,"* a third favourite, he always intended to translate, but the mirage stood in the way of all but obligatory exertion.

The restlessness of unsatisfied craving and desultory purpose soon after my first visit drove Dr Wilson to Eisenach. When I visited that town in 1881, in order to be near my friends, they occupied a house not far from the station.

"I love the signs of life and movement that I see from our windows here," Dr Wilson said; "especially on fête days and holidays the living

* The Greek Codex was first discovered in the Vatican Library, 1853, by Dr Dressel, and published by him at Göttingen in 1853. Criticism refers the work to the middle of the second century, as edited at Rome by Ebionite Christians. It has been translated into English.

streams that flow to and fro from morning till night exhilarate me."

Although cheerfully uttered the speech struck me as implying intense deep-seated melancholy. Was it not a sick man's yearning after the hale and the rosy, a captive's envy of the free? It only rested with himself to say the word; but his powers of decision, once so cruelly put to the proof, were gone. From Eisenach he moved back to Weimar, occasionally visiting England. The last time I saw him was at Hastings, a few years ago. We parted at the railway station, where he stooped down and kissed me tenderly.

"We shall meet again," I said, for I was always hoping to revisit Weimar.

He said nothing, but an expression in his face seemed to say, no. True enough, that was our final farewell. A millionaire, as I have ever deemed myself in the matter of friendship, how was my capital diminished by the loss of this most beloved and worthily-beloved man! Some of our friends embellish our lives, others build up, one or two beätify. Neither a flower,

melody, nor palmer's staff was the close friendship of Dr Wilson, instead a Scripture, plain to read bearing the incontestible stamp of finer spirits, souls, in the words of Plato and Spinoza, exempt from the lot of mortality.

The keynote of character is struck in early life, and in a little book of Eastern travel,* published by my friend so far back as 1848, I find the following sentences :—

"Thank God, we have still a leaven of manly Christian devotion working in the world's lump of vexatious vanity; we may yet hope to see our national worship in spirit and in truth within the walls of our churches, where upon one broad level, rich and poor, old and young, learned and simple, may bow down as brethren in the presence of the God and Father of us all. Here might be a reknitting of that bond of union which is the bond of strength in our social system, now bound by a rope of sand . . . the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of practical Christianity realised in our lives as professed upon our lips."

* Nozrani in Egypt. Longmans, 1848, 3rd edition.

And just upon forty years later in a little piece on the "Clementine Homilies," * published for private circulation occurs the following :—

"Anxiously painful feelings, to some even bewildering, may at first suggest themselves on this train of thought (the Hebraic attributes of the Divinity) as if tending to lower that standard of Divinity so sacredly identified in all our childhood traditions with the name of 'Our Saviour.' Yet painful as it may be to pious, amiable and estimable sentiment, we must be prepared to confront pain, and much pain, should the service of Truth demand it. All has in this world to be paid for, and Truth, or Love of Truth, ranks too high in Heaven to be cheaply appraised on earth."

Here we have the writer's Christian Socialism and standard of life fairly put forth ; a little lower down occurs a Carlylesque exposition of his theological views.

"Folks will have to look to it before long,

* "The Clementine Homilies," by Clericus, M.A., Cambridge, 1886. Weimar : Court Printing Office. Printed for private circulation.

to realise what our mediævalism so readily forgets—that terrible rising of the Copernican curtain of the universe, that natural revelation, the indisputable autograph of Deity, which in the sixteenth century so alternately paralysed and electrified the sensitive Melancthon, and which sturdy Luther (like our own sturdy Samuel with Lisbon earthquake) would not listen to, *because* it shook his faith." And in a note Dr Wilson adds of "a popular rhyme sung in our Metropolitan Churches A.D. 1885:

> 'Jesus is God and made the world
> And all our golden stars,'

a couplet surely betraying its recent escape from the nursery."

These brief extracts will show that a bottomless gulf divided Dr Wilson from that most flourishing and pretentious "branch of the Civil Service called the Church of England."

CHAPTER XXVII

A GROUP OF FRIENDS

My Capucin Brother—His Antipodes, Poverty, Chastity, Obedience, and Novel-reading—Two Ex-Priests—Ex-Priest Pastor B. — Ex-Priest the Commission Agent—A Spanish Convert to Protestantism

Theology and theologians have never possessed the very slightest attraction for me. Yet strange to say, some of my most valued friends and some of my most interesting acquaintances have been theology mad!

A year or two after those Weimar experiences I spent twelve months in the city of Nantes. Among my acquaintances was a young Franciscan monk, an Irishman by birth, who had solved the problem of life after cheerfulest fashion. For him the Darwinian theory existed not. The political tempests from time to time sweeping earth's surface were matter of no concern whatever, wars, pestilence, social

upheavals, international complications, no more affected him than if he already occupied a fauteuil in Paradise beside his intellectual master the Angelic Doctor.

Excellent company was this good-looking, florid, blue-eyed young Capucin, his brown serge robe and hempen girdle of true mediæval pattern, his bare feet sandalled, his red cotton pocket handkerchief thrust in the folds of his pocketless * garment. Easy enough to see that here spiritual dilemmas sat lightly, that no qualms of conscience disturbed this nineteenth century follower of St Francis.

His enjoyment of existence was artless, and would have been delightful to witness but for some irresistible reflections. Here was a vigorous son of Adam, a man by nature fully equipped for life's battle, thews and sinews, aptitudes and capacities in good order, who had yet unconcernedly thrown aside every vestige of moral responsibility, to whom indeed, humanity in general was less than the worm avoided in his walks.

* Pocketless because monks possess nothing.

Could human selfishness go farther, egotism find deeper level? Alike civic, social, and domestic duties were voluntarily shirked; for the sake of lazy pleasures and freedom from care he had placed himself in the category of infants, idiots and minors generally, true manhood, the only birthright worth having, being sacrificed out of sheer self-indulgence!

Father J—— frankly acknowledged himself among the happy ones of the earth. Lay brethren performed the menial work of his community. Coffee was served in his cell just as milk and liqueur to Sybarite undergraduates in their chambers. Six hours a day were traditionally assigned to study; recreation, religious exercise, and sleep filled up the margin. And meantime from January to December, from lustrum to lustrum and decade to decade, there were neither rent nor taxes to pay, no military service to be undergone, no worries in the shape of tailors' bills or reduced rate of bank interest. Who would not feel at times tempted to don serge robe and hempen girdle on such conditions?

The preposterousness of the situation was brought out all the more striking by Brother J——'s boon companion, the friend to whom I was indebted for the introduction.

This was an American gentleman of singular engagingness, a shining example of the masculine qualities insisted upon by me in a former page, that capacity for self-sacrifice and devotion so often arrogantly appropriated to themselves by my own sex.

My Transatlantic friend ought to have been a scholar with an easy fortune, above all things, he ought to have lived at Boston, in Paris, London, or some other literary centre, enjoying and enriching a cultivated circle. Instead, he was a modestly-paid official, condemned to uncongenial routine, to exile in a country of which he understood neither the language nor the people, for compensation so many dollars per month, the meat, drink, and wherewithal to be clothed of a limp little wife and three or four limp little children.

Father J—— although under thirty was fast emulating Friar Tuck, being plump to rotundity.

Mr C——, on the contrary, was lankier than the average American, which is saying a good deal. His clothes hung about him as those of an outfitter's manikin, so spare and fleshless looked he, that you dreaded lest any moment the slender scaffolding should tumble, the ill-supported structure fall to pieces.

Tenderly attached to the limp little wife and limp little daughters, early imbued with notions of feminine supremacy, Mr C—— yet at every available moment vanished into a world of his own, a world they knew not, the enchanted region of Bookland. He had contrived, Heaven knows how, to carry his books about with him wherever he went, a choice little collection, chiefly of imaginative literature, and these compensated for earthly ills. Shakespeare, Goethe, Calderon, Camoens made him forget the dreary Darwinian problem, the struggle for life.

Whilst evidently it never struck Father J—— that his existence was one of egregious selfishness, so his American comrade took his own hard lot quite as a matter of course. With the most perfect good humour he allowed himself to

be bundled from one room to another, on the most trivial pretext; now the children wanted his study, being livelier than the other rooms; now he must make use of the dining-room, and so on. With other American husbands and bread-winners he seemed to be perpetually on suffrance, a necessary evil.

Father J——, Mr C——, and myself often collogued together, our long discussions being upon literature, philosophy or Romanism. The young Capucin was a great novel reader. "I go to Walter Scott, Dickens, and the rest, for knowledge of life, a knowledge I cannot, of course, acquire within the monastery walls," he used to observe.

The topic he loved best and the topic on which he shone was the spiritual life as set forth by St Thomas Aquinas.

The Franciscans have their own school of oratory. Father J—— could roll his eyes, lunge forward, go into ecstasies, after approved fashion, expression, attitude, tone, having naught of the lay element about them. Everything was as monachal as could possibly be.

Nantes of all great French towns, and I may boast that I know all, has fewest attractions for me. I never revisited the city that lent its name to the first edict of religious tolerance ever published, and later on, to the infamous traffic in human flesh. The young Franciscan and our common friend, the fastidious book-lover, faded from my life as if I had known them in dreams only.

To later years belong a group of still more striking figures, and all three belonging to French experience.

We hear in England enough and to spare about perversions to Rome. Little is said about reversions from Romish superstition to Protestant liberty of conscience. Yet such instances are of frequent occurrence. In his new, most important work on Greater Britain,* M. Leroy-Beaulieu notes two deeply interesting and gratifying facts, namely, the frequent conversions of Roman Catholics to Protestantism in Australasia and the comparative insignificance and stagnation of the Romish element, our young, sturdy, healthy England

* Les colonies Anglo-Saxonnes. Paris, 1897.

of the Antipodes is Nonconformist to the backbone. Whilst the Salvation Army,* a body for which I entertain the utmost respect, is gaining ground on every inch of Australasian soil, our colonists will have nothing to do with confession, tawdry ceremonial and superstitions only becoming the darkest of dark ages. The Salvation Army has the unmistakable, indisputable quality of earnestness, freedom from sham. For my part, I adore the poke bonnet and scarlet jersey. I have heard Liszt improvise divinely, Sims Reeves sing in his apogee, the Garde Républicaine, the finest orchestral, concerted and individual performances of our time. No music ravishes my ears as that of the Salvation Army. Those hearty strains, vocal and instrumental, heard every Sunday, never fail to stir my pulse with purest rapture. For do they not remind me of our hardly acquired religious liberty, the right enjoyed by every English subject to save

* "The phylloxera of Evangelicalism" is the charitable verdict of a Church of England clergyman, the Rev. S. B. Gould on General Booth's sect. See his "Deserts of Central France."

or damn himself as he pleases, to regard his salvation, so-called, as purely a personal affair as that of choosing a partner in life or a career?

It was in 1878 that I met the late Pastor Berthuel of Arbois; there is no need to conceal this remarkable man's name, it belongs to the history of French Protestantism.*

Not many years before, the Romish Church in France had suffered a severe blow, in her own words, had been humiliated by a grave scandal. One of her brightest ornaments, a priest endowed with rare intellectual and oratorical powers, announced his intention not only of embracing the Reformed religion but of becoming a Protestant minister. Argument, threats, coaxing proved useless. Had he remained where he was, honours and emoluments were certain to be his in due course, and now the most tempting baits were held out. Firm as a rock, unmoved alike by

* See "Le Chrétien Français," organ of the new movement; the reversion of Romish priests to Protestantism now taking such wide development.

casuistry or the affectionate importunities of relations, he took up his cross. For it must be borne in mind that whilst the convert to Rome is fooled to the top of his bent, the killing of the fatted calf being insignificant beside the petting received by a pervert, quite otherwise is it with the renunciator of tradition for liberty of conscience. Cordially welcomed by his brethren and co-religionists of course he is, but alas ! intolerance is a weed not as yet unrooted from French soil. In the eyes of the Ultramontane a Protestant is still a heretic, a brand only fit for the burning. What then must be the position of an ex-priest turned Lutheran pastor? The *défroqué* for conscience' sake is not only an accursed one, a theological castaway, a pariah of society, he is also cut off from the domestic affections. First to fall away from such a renegade are mother, sister, niece, those who loved him, whose pure affection kept alive his own. If kinsmen are less obdurate they are not always able to testify their influence. Feminine influence is too strong.

Pastor Berthuel's case reminded me of Dr

Wilson's. The one great struggle of his life seemed to have left him not purposeless, he admirably fulfilled his duties, but quite unable to take any further initiative. Protestant friends in England invited him to London; there he would most assuredly have found stimulus and a fitting sphere. But no, the humblest of French pastorates, a congregation of fifty souls, chiefly peasants, a stipend of as many pounds, with dwelling, these sufficed. He did not look unhappy; on the contrary, there was chastened elation in every reference to his new calling. Yet one could but feel the inadequacy of such a position, and he must himself at times have felt the cost of his sacrifice.

He had married a worthy Protestant lady, and a young niece brightened their humble home. Very pleasantly he did the honours of pretty little Arbois, showing me the exquisite *Cluse* or valley of the river Cuisance, explaining here the formation of tufa in the river bed, there its dissolution, the two processes being observable near each other. Of the matter most interesting to me, namely, his secession, he dropped no hint.

I learned afterwards that the confessional and its abuse had driven him from Rome.

Pastor Berthuel died at Arbois four years ago; during his ministry he had done more than keep the little Protestant congregation together, adding several converts to the number. One of these I met some years later at Champagnole.

The second ex-priest whom I have had the honour of knowing was of quite a different calibre.

With Monsieur C—— it was a revolt of commonsense rather than of fastidious conscience. He threw up Rome and the priesthood, sacrificing good repute, family ties, home, a livelihood, just because reason had asserted itself. The monstrous childishness of the tenets he was compelled to profess and inculcate, the profound immorality of the confessional, the mockery underlying priestly vows, all these made him ashamed of the tonsure and black robe. Without means, without friends, without training for active life, he burnt his boats and breasted the stream.

Poor fellow! When I made his acquaintance

in Paris, he was exercising as many trades as he counted years, the most lucrative being that of epitaph writing! A seminarist may be ignorant of everything else under the sun, he is bound to understand Latin.

So Monsieur C—— was, so to say, put on the staff of a monumental mason, earning a few francs here and there by wording eulogistic epigraphs in Latin. When any person of note or wealth died, the inscription would be pretty long and Monsieur C——'s emoluments in proportion.

He also had taken to himself a wife, and domestic anxieties no more spare an ex-priest than one to the manner born. Despite inborn gaiety of disposition and hopefulness not to be checked by rebuffs, occasional fits of depression would overtake him. Here is an extract from one of his letters to myself:—

"Love of justice and truth, detestation of hypocrisy, induced me to quit the Romish priesthood. Without fortune, without a profession, ignorant of practical life and its struggle, I nevertheless decided upon this step, confiding in my own courage and in the uprightness of my

purpose. I have undergone bitter suffering, I have also had my intervals of joy and consolation. The hardest part of existence is this: instead of being able to devote myself to intellectual pursuits, to literature and philosophy, I am compelled to run about from morning till night in search of daily bread. I have knocked in vain at editorial doors, I have vainly tried my hand at fiction. As a last resource I now follow the calling of commission agent."

My third recusant from Rome needs no commiseration, rather I should say, arouses no pensive sigh. Señor José, a young Spaniard preparing for the ministry at Montauban, was the joyfulest creature conceivable. He had just entered upon the *Lune de Miel* of conversion, that blissful honeymoon when marytrdom for his newly-embraced creed would have been rapturously welcomed, the rumour of a revived Inquisition, a resuscitated Torquemada on native soil, awakened intensest delight. The mere fact of outlawry, odium, revilings seemed contemptible drawbacks, wholly unworthy of the occasion. Don José was spending the summer vacation

under the same roof with myself, in a pleasant French parsonage of the Pyrenees. With what ecstasy he replaced the pastor during temporary absence, improvising family prayers, giving long expositions of Scripture! Delivered in the most imperfect, strangely accented French, accompanied by unctuous personalities, intolerably drawn out, we yet listened with the utmost patience. Who could do otherwise? Let us hope that the fervid convert will celebrate the Jubilee of conversion as joyfully as he has done its initial fête! above all, that he will win a few fellow-countrymen from their sombre mediævalism and intolerance!

Here, at least for the present, these reminiscences end. Perhaps I cannot more fittingly close them than with the following verses, verses in which are summed up reflections that have gone before. No, let the Schopenhauers, the Ibsens, the Nietzches say what they will, Life is good and wholesome! It rests with ourselves whether it prove a curse or a benediction.

THE BRIDGE OF YEARS.

I.

Rose-garlanded, frail as if fairies wove,
  Wet with the dew of all too happy tears,
Those memories of first, best, only love,
  That span from youth to age our Bridge of Years.

II.

As granite, cold, remorseless, obdurate
  Alike to passionate prayer or trembling fears,
Those forces, shall we call them Chance or Fate?
  That sternly, slowly built our Bridge of Years.

III.

Crystalline vault, aerial colonnade,
  Such architecture as the hoarfrost rears,
Were evanescent hopes and dreams that made
  Unreal, yet how fair! our Bridge of Years.

IV.

As starry path swept clean by tempest wrack,
  Far off perspective of a thousand spheres,
That passing of high souls across our track,
  Whose lives illuminate our Bridge of Years.

V.

Symphonious as an aisle on Easter Day,
  Or woodland avenue when the springtide nears,
Now with a requiem, now with roundelay,
  Echoes from youth to age our Bridge of Years.

THE END

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